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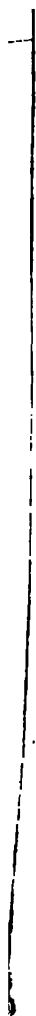






THE
CHRONICLES OF WALTHAM.

VOL. I.





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THE
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VOL. I.



THE
CHRONICLES OF WALTHAM.

VOL. I.

CHRONICLES OF WAJ. CHAM.

ADVERTISEMENT

Nothing could be easier than to select the
reading public, that the *Chronicles* have been
into the following Volume were discussed by
me in an old chest, or conveyed by a messenger
friend; and that I was allowed to be doing
request when I sent this to the Press. The
time for doing such a service has however
gone by, and I therefore believe that it is best
to state frankly and fairly at the outset, that
the *Tales themselves* are not in the category of things
thing more than a vehicle by means of which I

have judged it expedient to describe, partly, scenes that have to a certain extent passed under my own observation, partly my own opinions with reference to points, on which all men will and do form judgments for themselves. Whether my philosophy be sound or otherwise, it is not for me to determine. I believe, however, at least I earnestly hope, that it will not be found to teach any lesson which shall so much as seem, in the most remote degree, to run counter to the duties which the different classes of society owe to one another, and which all owe alike to their country and their God.

There is one more point on which I consider it right to touch. The names introduced into the greater number of these tales are almost all peculiar to East Kent; and as such I have used them. But I beg distinctly to disclaim every thing like an allusion to individuals. Systems and habits of life I wish to describe in the colours that seem to me to be just; but with private feeling or



THE
FARM OF FORTY ACRES.

VOL. I.

B



THE
FARM OF FORTY ACRES.

CHAPTER I.

PROSPEROUS TIMES.

THERE are not many villages in England, of which the general appearance is more attractive, without in the most remote degree bordering on the romantic, than Waltham in Kent. Planted at the foot of one of those undulating hills in which Kent, above all other southern counties, abounds,—washed on the other side by a clear silver stream, which, pouring its gentle tide through meadows exquisitely green, collects first into a mill-dam, and then, after turning the machinery of the mill itself, passes off in a rapid current towards the sea,—if ever village bore about it an air of perfect innocence

and contentment, Waltham may fairly lay claim to the honourable distinction. It consists of a single street, broad, unpaved, and shaded on either hand by rows of stately trees. This, about the centre, makes a curve, so as to place the fine old church at the base, as it were, of a triangle ; while around it are rich meadows, luxuriant hop-gardens, fields that wave in their appointed season with yellow corn, hedge-rows dividing one parcel of land from another, with here and there a grove, a farmhouse, a gentleman's seat, a cluster of cottages, either scattered loosely over the face of the earth, or gathered into neat hamlets. I do not mean to say that the moralist will not detect even about Waltham symptoms that may be apt to create in his mind uneasy misgivings. There are, for example, more than one or two public-houses in the place. The Red Lion presses too closely upon the Black Dog ; and the Anchor and the Blue Boar stand opposite, in rivalry one to the other. But, to counterbalance these, we find the blacksmith's forge, the carpenter's yard, the butcher's shamble, the grocer's store, the saddler's shop, the baker's oven, and, though last, not least, the tailor's work-shop. In all of these, "from morn to dewy eve," busy hands are plied, ham-

mering, dressing, weighing, chopping, stitching, in order that the labourers by whom the surrounding fields are cultivated may find beside their own doors means of supplying all the wants to which their primitive state of existence is likely to expose them.

After the preceding description of the place, it is scarcely necessary to add, that Waltham is not, nor ever was, what is called a manufacturing village. As will be seen by-and-by, an attempt was once made to render it such, but it failed; and now the only loom of which the place can boast stands in the workhouse; and the only species of fabric which its inhabitants can bring into the market is coarse toweling and hop-bags. For, like the parish of which it is the centre, Waltham is strictly agricultural, all its little internal commerce consisting in the formation and sale of such articles as labouring people, whether farmers or farm-servants, require in the prosecution of their calling. With respect, again, to its society,—that may be described in few words. There is no hospitable manor-house either in the village or immediately contiguous to it. About a mile and a half removed, stands, to be sure, an old Elizabethan mansion; neglected, however, and fall-

ing rapidly to decay ; while another abuts upon the church itself, though in a still more ruinous condition. But the former contains only a couple of servants, a gardener and a game-keeper, with their wives and families ; while the latter, originally a portion of a convent of Black Friars, has, for these last fifty years, been entirely shut up. The aristocracy of Waltham consists, therefore, of the Rev. Hugh Jacobson, the perpetual curate — an incumbent happy in possessing a professional revenue of ninety pounds a year ; a Mr. Holtum, the apothecary, a gentleman quiet in his manners, industrious in his calling, the master of very considerable reading, and a large and harassing practice ; of Mr. Dodds, the lessee of the great tithes under Sir Marmaduke Littlebourne, the lay impropiator ; and of Mr. Sankey, the principal tenant and steward of Lord Brambling. These, with one or two families besides, which, occupying farmhouses in the immediate vicinity, have been accustomed from time to time to meet over a social cup of tea, and, on great occasions, at dinner, long constituted, and, to a certain extent, still constitute, the select society of Waltham. But the harmony that used to prevail among them is not quite so perfect as it once was.

that frequented it on Sunday. I heard, indeed, that a shoemaker had a short time previously ventured to declare himself a disciple of Tom Paine and an advocate for the 'Rights of Man,' till the village became so hot for him that he was glad to abandon it, after all his customers had abandoned him; but, except in this solitary instance, a disaffected person was not known to have broached his opinions in the place, nor could any sect of dissenters succeed in establishing a meeting-house within a mile of it. In a word, the inhabitants of Waltham might be rude, for the village could not yet boast of any other place of daily instruction for the young people than three or four dames' schools; they might be ignorant, for newspapers were unknown in their tap-rooms; they might be bigoted, for they would not listen to any other religious doctrine than that which the curate inculcated from the pulpit; and they might be slavish, for church and king was their rallying cry: but a happier, because a more contented, and, I may venture to add, a more innocent population was not to be found in any village of the same size within the compass of the four seas.

Time passed; and the war, which was felt

elsewhere as a burthen, seemed but to increase the prosperity of Waltham. Corn rose enormously in price; and stock, and wool, and other produce of agricultural operations, kept pace with it. Of course the landlords raised their rents, and the farmers increased the wages of their people. Yet not a voice was heard to complain, for all classes appeared to thrive in nearly the same ratio; and if they paid more for the necessaries of life than they once did, they had more wherewith to make their purchases. Unfortunately, however, the extreme of success is to the full as dangerous to man's moral existence as its opposite.

The greater landlords, both here and elsewhere, finding that no objections were offered to increased rents, began to change their style of living. They bought up land wherever it was to be purchased, till in the end they had annihilated the race of minor squires, who used once upon a time to connect them with the yeomanry,—being for the most part cadets of their own families. This done, they became every day more and more aristocratic in their habits. Tenants' balls were rarely given; and even the race-course itself, with the county assemblies, all at once began to be neglect-

ed. They slid imperceptibly into the circle which had formerly circumscribed the nobility alone. They added field to field; and their younger sons, instead of being portioned off upon small properties, crowded the ranks of the army and the navy, and became candidates for the best preferments in the church.

Still, there was no positive alienation between them and their inferiors. To be sure, both the squire and the baronet began to think more lightly than he used to do of that which his father and grandfather held in profound reverence. He made no scruple of ejecting the tenant of four or five generations, to make way for a new man, provided the latter offered a larger rent; and multitudes of occupancies, which used to support each its separate family, were thrown into one, because large farmers paid most liberally. But, in spite of these changes, there was, or there seemed to be, at least for a time, a good deal of correct feeling on both sides; for the landlord and tenant always spoke kindly when they chanced to meet, and the latter did not dream, in case of a contested election, to vote against the wishes of the former, for by this time political antipa-

thies had resumed their force. In proportion as the immediate dangers of a revolution wore off, and the arms of England prevailed both by sea and land, the factions of Whig and Tory, which have so long sacrificed their country's best interests to party feeling, resumed their influence, till the only tie which they failed to sever were those of private friendship — men being as yet content to wear their colours on their breasts on fitting occasions, without considering it necessary to wrangle about them when the occasion passed away.

In exact proportion to the change of domestic habits among the untitled aristocracy, was that which occurred in the manners and customs of the tenantry. The old-fashioned smock-frock farmer became every day more and more rare. For a time, indeed, he might be seen jogging towards the market town, either in his tax-cart, with his daughters beside him, the latter being charged with the duty of selling the eggs and poultry, or sitting on his long-backed steed, the fore-horse of the team, himself in front, his frugal and comely dame on a pillion behind. His accustomed seat in the tap-room, likewise, continued to hold him; and he smoked his pipe and drank

his tankard cheerfully with those of his own cast and standing. But by degrees all this wore out. The forty, or sixty-acre farm was wanted to complete a holding such as a substantial and intelligent yeoman might occupy; and Hodge being unceremoniously dismissed, his house was rased to the ground, or became converted into cottages. Then might be seen a very different class of tenants,—spruce, neat, well-dressed, dandy gentlemen; with yellow-top boots, made by the Hoby of the day, and blue coats with bright metal buttons, dashing to market on their bits of blood, or driving their ladies in green gigs, picked out with orange! Who so gay, who so blithe as they? They were England's boast, the very pith and sinews of society; who, selling their corn at five and six pounds a quarter, did not value any man a straw, because they were just as independent as the squire himself. Their fathers, to be sure, had boarded their labourers; their fathers rose early, held the plough, returned at twelve o'clock to their boiled pork and greens and home-brewed beer, went forth again till the evening, and slept soundly all night after a substantial supper and a tumbler of warm punch.

better. They came to church, no doubt ; but it was to see and to be seen. The parson they held in small estimation, and his discourses in still smaller ; and though they paid their compositions freely, it was because money was no object to them, and they knew quite well that they had an excellent bargain of their tithes. And as to their wives and daughters, they played the piano, they embroidered, they read novels, they dressed with great neatness ; but the making of butter they left entirely in the hands of the dairy-maid, and the disposal of it to paid agents. Balls, plays, as often as the strollers came to the neighbouring town,—card assemblies at the Lion, and private parties at home or abroad,—to appear to advantage at these was the great end of their existence, which they prosecuted with as much assiduity as similar pursuits were followed by the class above them, with whom, if they could not vie in refinement, they at least established a fierce rivalry in gowns, cloaks, and bonnets.

It is an old remark, but not on that account the less worthy to be repeated, that both the vices and the virtues of society, while they assume a broader character as we go downwards in the scale, are yet in all classes essentially the

the tap-room, there were Tom, and Harry, all merry and right good, told stories and sang songs and night to wear away delightfully, another strong attraction wanting landlord, aware of the power of sensitive minds, had always a minstrel who charmed his guests with such "Nancy Dawson," and "Black Joke" bly performed on the fiddle. And visions of more than ordinary rejoicing round, such as a harvest-home, or a or St. Thomas's day, or Christmas eve other of the festivals which during the perous times were not of rare occurrence pipe and the tabor set many pairs of heels till the walls of the old building shook tread of heavy feet. All this, however, no change for the worse in the condition people. They were universally in full they had all wherewith to fill their and if they had become somewhat careless matters of the

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

“DON’T cry and fret so, mother,” said Giles Solley, to his weeping and disconsolate parent. “To be sure, father be dead, and you be a widow, and we all be orphans like; and it’s a hard thing to lose a father and a husband. But Muster Jacobson said, he thought as how my lord wouldn’t turn us out of the farm if so be I was fit to carry it on; for we had held it under his honour, and his honour’s forefathers, so long, that my lord couldn’t but take an interest in us: and as soon as the burying is over, I’ll go to Muster Sankey, the steward, and I think we will get his good word anyhow, whether we be to stay, or to quit. I am one-and-twenty next birth-day; Dick will soon be eighteen; so I am sure we are both old enough to manage the business: and little Molly is fast coming on to be of use to you; and

small farm to any advantage. But Mr. Rigden was not more punctual at rent-day than old Solley; and old Solley's payments, though smaller in actual amount, were in full proportion to those of Mr. Rigden. Again, when Lord Brambling did by chance visit his estate at Waltham, on which, by-the-bye he had no mansion, and where he was always the guest of Mr. Sankey the steward,—though old Solley did not, like Mr. Rigden, join him in the field, nor offer him port and sherry and rich cake for luncheon, as often as he called at Crackstakes, he received, what deserves to be accounted to the full as valuable, the affections of a devoted heart; and proud was the old man of the honour conferred upon him by his landlord, if he broke a bit of bread and cheese, and drank a glass of ale under his roof. But, Lord Brambling, a disciple of the Norfolk school, was disposed to contrast the state of living at Crackstakes and at Gorse Hall, very much to the disadvantage of the former, and to express his wish that every tenant on his lands should be in a condition to give him as good a glass of wine as he could give his tenants. This was very commendable in his lordship, when regarded as an abstract proposition. It implied an earnest wish on

have imbibed their father's correct principles; and the eldest son, in particular, was accounted a remarkably steady and hard-working lad. To be sure, they did not pretend to associate with the young farmers round them; neither did they ride such horses as could be admitted into the ranks of the yeomanry; but all men spoke well of them, and the clergyman, whose ministry they attended with praise-worthy exactness, was ready at any moment to give them a character. It was therefore regarded as a settled point in Waltham, that Giles would take his father's place, and that the Solleys would continue to make a living out of Crackstakes, as they had done during many generations.

The old man's funeral, like the manner of his life, was plain and unostentatious. The coffin, conveyed upon a waggon as far as the churchyard gate, was there raised on the shoulders of four labourers, and was followed to the grave only by the widow and the orphans; whose tears, shed in profuse quantities, were neither forced nor feigned.

"God rest his soul," said an old thatcher, who walked up to the brink of the grave as the sexton began to shovel in the earth. "God rest his soul! He was a kind good master to

standing empty. Still Giles spoke of putting our trust in Heaven ; reminded his mother that there is one who is the Father of the fatherless, and the God of the widow ; and asked her whether she would wish to bring back the deceased from a place of rest, whither she might be well assured that he was gone. But his mother's sole answer was, that she knew it to be wrong—she knew it to be very sinful—but she could not help it, and she hoped God would forgive her. “ Oh ! he was a kind husband to me,” continued she, throwing herself on her son's neck, and speaking in broken sobs ; “ a kind, kind husband to me, and a good father to all of you ; and that is the reason I am so wicked as to wish that it had pleased God to leave him here, or to take us all with him.” The mother's deep emotion was of course communicated at once to her comforter ; and the little group, to use the beautiful language of Scripture, “ lifted up their voices and wept.”

The day wore on, and the dinner-hour came, —still at Crackstake, what it had ever been, twelve o'clock ;—and the pork and greens with the apple dumplings, dressed on this occasion by the maid of all work, were eaten in silence. The meal ended, household and out-of-door

not, indeed : and how can either you or I tell that he did not see it ? At all events we know, as Muster Jacobson says, that there is one eye that sees all things ; and both you and I are now more bound than ever to think of this. Our poor mother will have no comfort on earth if we go wrong. Dick, you must break with Tom Overy altogether. He is not fit to be your companion ; he never goes to church, and people don't speak well of him."

" I will have no friend but you, Giles," answered Dick affectionately ; " no companion, no associate, but my brother ; and we will work for our mother by night and by day, till we see her as cheerful as she used to be, and make her forget the loss that both she and we have suffered."

In this frame of mind the young men reached home, where they found all things arranged in the very same order that used to mark the close of each day when old Solley was alive. Their mother, likewise, had so far controlled her grief that she joined them at supper ; and their conversation, though still carried on in a low tone, and interrupted from time to time by long fits of abstraction, evinced upon the whole a desire on all sides to submit their

clear, solemn, and distinct tone
kindly expressions of good-night
the family retired to rest, if not but
composed and confiding.

when he found himself at the door; from which with becoming turned away, that he might re-entrance by the kitchen. He submitted; and desiring to have a v Sankey, the servant conducted him delay, into the great man's parlour standing open, with music-books the chairs hard by, seemed to indicate of the young ladies had been retreating; though, when Giles entered was untenanted except by Mr. S. self, who sat with pen and ink before him at the table. The young man cast a hasty glance round him.

He beheld a handsome side-board with two or three silver tankards, a silver made of the same metal, of table spoons laid cross-ways one and groups of wine-glasses.

threshold, holding his hat in his left hand, while with his right he smoothed down the hair upon his brow.

"Well, Giles," said the steward, without deigning to bid the young man sit, "I was just thinking of sending for you. The death of your father must be a great loss to you all, and no man will lament it more than my lord. He was a mighty favourite with my lord, as you know. And what do you mean to do, Giles? where do you mean to fix your mother? Not that there is any immediate hurry about that, for my lord is very kind, and you will of course remain where you are till after Michaelmas. But it may not be amiss if you consider what is best to be done afterwards; and I am sure I shall be very happy, out of respect to your father's memory, to grant you all the assistance in my power."

"I thank your honour very much," replied Giles, "and I never doubted my lord's goodwill to a family that has been under him so long as we have; and therefore I came this evening to say that, with my lord's leave and your honour's, I will go on just as father did before me, so that there won't be any occasion to look for a home for mother, because she will

live with me at Crackstakes, and look after things as usual."

"Humph!" answered the steward, "that is very good as far as you are concerned; it shows a right feeling for your mother, and does you great credit; though, Giles, what will Mary Tapsal say to it? I don't think the old and the young would agree very well together, for they say it never answers to keep two clucking hens in the same nest."

"Oh! as to that, you know," replied Giles, smiling, "Mary and I haven't been published yet, and we can wait a while, if we ever be published at all. My first duty is to see that mother is made comfortable, and Mary is too good a girl not to like me the better for attending to that."

"Very true, Giles," said the steward, in a tone somewhat more serious; "but I am afraid there are other objections to the arrangement. I doubt whether you have experience or capital enough to carry on farming business as my lord wishes it to be conducted. You are but a boy, tall and stout as you are. I think it would be best for you to wait a few years before you think of setting up for yourself."

"Lord love your honour!" was Giles's re-

ply: "I have had the chief management of the concern these two year; for father's health has long been breaking, and he trusted me with everything. To be sure, there arn't much capital among us; but we are not worse off than we were when father was alive; and you know yourself, Mr. Sankey, that we bean't extravagant in our habits."

"Yes, Giles, all that is very just. But, you see, times are changed. My lord does not like these small holdings. He says, what is true, that where there is not a great outlay upon land, there can never be a great return; and that the farmer ought to keep pace with other classes in society. As long as your father lived, he would not, on any account, interfere with the old man's fancies; but now he does not wish to let Crackstakes any longer by itself. He is desirous of adding something to it, so that the concern may better repay the labour and the capital that are expended on it."

"My lord is very good," replied Giles, looking up with a sort of half hopeful, half doubting expression; "and I take it very kind of him to trouble himself about our success. But I should like to take a day or two to consider whether we could venture to hire another farm.

"Perhaps so, Giles," answered the steward ; " but you see my lord won't have it so. And therefore, if you can't undertake an additional holding of four hundred and fifty acres, why then I suspect it must end in your giving up what you have. My lord will, in that case, add Crackstakes to Gorse Hall."

"Your honour can't mean that," replied Giles, in a tone of mixed alarm and incredulity. " My lord would never think of turning us out of a farm that we have held for so many generations, as long as we are able and willing to pay the rent that he chooses to put upon it."

"Indeed, Giles, but I do mean, if not that, at all events something very like it. The fact of the matter is this : these small farms won't do. They don't put those that hold them in a better situation than the labourer ; on the contrary, I am inclined to think that their situation is much worse ; and it is quite certain that they neither produce so much, nor can be managed with the same nicety, as the large farms. In short, the system is a bad one. Look at the expense of keeping up a house, a barn, a stable, and all the other appendages to a farm, for every forty or fifty acres of land. And then, look at the class of persons that in-

have not half the number of holidays that they have. I really thought, Giles, you had been a lad of sense ; but if you hold such language as this, I shall begin to fancy that I was mistaken."

"Whatever I may be," replied Giles, bitterly, "at least your honour knows that I am come of an honest stock. Have we ever been behind with our rent ? and have we not always paid as much and as regularly, in proportion, as Mr. Rigden, or any other of the gentlemen farmers ?"

"I cannot deny that you have, Giles."

"And if my lord gets his rent, and we pay our way and do justice to his land, what matters it how we live, provided we be content with our living ?"

"But, Giles, don't you see that everywhere else small farms are extinguished ; and you wouldn't have my lord keep a class of tenants about him such as no other landlord will tolerate."

"It is not every landlord, Mr. Sankey, that can point to a tenant's house, and say—'that was occupied by the family which holds it still, before the lands came into the possession of my

"I deny that altogether," replied Giles warmly; "I know that Mr. Rigden has often said as much; and I now see what was his object. He wanted to get our bit of land into his own occupation, and he seems likely enough to succeed. But let him remember what Nathan said about the rich man who took his poor neighbour's single ewe lamb, lest he be not, one day or another, treated as David threatened to treat the oppressor."

"Look you, young man," replied the steward, in his turn waxing warm; "I take it you didn't come here to preach, or give me any of your impertinence; but to ascertain how my lord intended to deal with one of his farms which is now vacant. And I will cut the matter short by telling you, that you shall not have it. If you had played your cards well, I might have been a friend to you. As it is, I have nothing further to say than that you quit at Michaelmas, and that you may make any arrangements for the future that you please, for I wash my hands of you."

"And is this all?" demanded Giles.

"This is certainly all," was the reply; while Mr. Sankey rose, and extending his hand to the bell, rang it. "Show Mr. Solley out," said

CHAPTER IV.

LETTER-WRITING.

AT the door of their own house Giles was met by his mother, whose countenance, though deeply overshadowed with melancholy, implied that a sense of what was due both to her family and to herself was beginning to work out its accustomed beneficial effects. A faint smile curled her mouth, and there was an expression of something like impatience in her eyes, as she good-humouredly challenged her son for having delayed so long on his mission; but when he passed her without speaking, and threw himself doggedly into his father's chair, the heart of the widow sank within her, and she could with difficulty suppress her tears.

"What is the matter, Giles?" said she. "What has happened since you went out in the morning?"

"Oh, nothing, mother; nothing at all!" re-

and burying her face in her apron. "Where are we to find a living if this be taken away from us? It was not for nothing that I said all hope was buried in your father's grave. Oh! my dear, dear husband, I would to God that I were laid beside you!"

"Nay, nay, mother," said Giles, restored to comparative calmness by the contemplation of his mother's grief, "it is no use taking on at this rate. What must be, must; and if we cannot bear up against the storm, we must bend to it. But we shan't be put off by a notice from the steward only: we have been long enough on the land to justify the liberty, and I will apply to my lord himself. Who knows but he may have compassion on us after all? and in spite of Mr. Sankey, you may yet go on to old age in the house where your children were born."

"God bless you, my boy!" replied the widow, drying her tears. "You shall do as you say, and I am sure my lord will not deny the petition of the father's son. But how will you get at my lord? You cannot go to London to seek him, and you have not been used to write to such as he."

"I will manage that somehow," answered

on the whole, an unequal combat with her apprehensions of failure.

When the hour of striking work came, Giles and his brother returned home as usual together, without, however, Giles having communicated to Dick anything that had occurred. He knew that his brother, though warm-hearted, was giddy and volatile; and it had been agreed between his mother and himself that, for the present at least, no mention should be made of what had taken place at Mr. Sankey's. Little conversation therefore passed between them, and even at supper Giles was unusually reserved. Of course the curiosity of the younger brother was roused, and he questioned Giles as to the cause of his silence; but he received no satisfactory answer. On the contrary, Giles rose as soon as the meal was ended, took his hat, and moved towards the door.

"Why, brother, what is the matter?" again demanded Dick. "There must be something wrong that takes you out of a night; and it is not fair to keep the secret from me, who keep no secrets from you."

"Your brother has some business to manage for me in the street," said their mother. "It

shouting, clamouring, and chasing one another. From the bakers' and the grocers' windows light was streaming; and the public-houses sent forth each its noise of revelry and singing. Giles, though he scarcely expected to find Tom Overy at his lodgings, proceeded thither in quest of him; but being told that he had not shown himself there since he went abroad in the morning, he turned his steps in an opposite direction. He stopped at the door of the Black Dog; received an answer in the affirmative as to Tom's presence there; made some excuse for not passing to the tap-room, and requested that Tom might be called out. He came,—apparently in his usual state, that is to say, not drunk, though somewhat elevated with liquor; and finding who it was that desired to converse with him, burst into a shout of astonishment.

“What, Giles! Giles Solley! art going to turn good fellow at last? Well, I thought it would be so after all. Now the old man is out of the way, we shall have both one and t’other among us. Come in, man; come in and have a drop. I will stand treat to-night, anyhow, were it only for the pleasure of seeing thee like other folk.”

than to-morrow afternoon ; but if you will be at my lodgings exactly at six, I will have pens and paper ready, and we will draw up such a letter as will set you all square with my lord." Giles could not of course press the point, though he experienced more of disappointment at the delay than his more sober judgment could account for. So, after promising to be punctual, he shook hands with his new associate, and returned to his impatient mother.

The remainder of that evening was spent at Crackstake according to the custom which old Solley had established ; and the sleep of its humble inmates, if not free from uneasy dreams, was, upon the whole, refreshing. With the morrow, however, came a necessity for exertion, which is always the parent of tranquillity ; and Giles and Dick were hard at work as soon as there was light. Neither did there occur any incident of which it is necessary to take notice, till about three hours after noon, when Giles, who was assisting to dig the hop-garden where it bordered upon a bridle-path, observed two horsemen, whom he at once recognised as Mr. Rigden and Mr. Sankey the steward, riding slowly together, as it seemed, from Gorse Hall to Waltham.

“Well, but are you to see it after it is written?”

“No, I suppose not; but that don’t signify. Besides, I have taken care to——”

Here the distance to which the speaker had advanced beyond the spot where Giles stood caused the remainder of the sentence to be lost; and Giles, having waited till a turn in the road concealed both him and his companion, resumed his labour without wasting a thought on what had been uttered in his hearing.

Giles not only did not repeat what he had overheard when he returned home, but had by that time totally forgotten that anything of the kind had occurred. His whole attention was indeed given up to the composition of the letter, on which he could not but believe all the prospects of his family would depend. Two extremes must, he conceived, be avoided. It would not answer his purpose to bring charges against a man in whom his landlord reposed confidence; while to beg abjectly for that to which he fancied that he had a sort of moral right, would go sorely against the grain. “I may tell him,” said he to himself, “that on all his lands there is not a family that would

with a sheet of gilt-edged paper, a pen, and a little ink in a broken wine-glass; and the two sitting down to the table together, the work of composition began. I need not add, that it was carried forward with so much deliberation and care, that a full hour elapsed ere it came to the affixing of the signature. But completed it was at last, much to the satisfaction of both parties; and Giles had tucked up his sleeve to sign, when Tom, who either did not observe or affected not to observe the movement, anticipated him. The words "Giles Solley" were thus appended in the same hand which gave its character to the epistle; and Giles was with little difficulty convinced that it ought to be so. "And now for sealing it," said Tom; "just go to that cupboard and fetch a paper of wafers that you will see on the upper shelf." Giles did so, and beheld to his astonishment when he returned, that the very address on the back of the letter was completed.

"Why, Tom," said he, "thou can write fast enough when thou likes. It has taken thee less time to write this long direction than it did to date the letter, or write, 'Please your lordship.'"

"To be sure it has," replied Tom, "and for

CHAPTER V.

LOVE IN A VILLAGE.

ALLUSION was made in a previous chapter to one Mary Tapsal, towards whom Mr. Sankey jocularly accused Giles Solley of harbouring something like an attachment. It will be remembered, also, that Giles rather evaded than denied the charge; and it has probably been conjectured, from that circumstance, that the charge was not wholly groundless. Nor would he who arrived at that judgment fall into any serious error, provided he took care to keep in mind what are the habits of young men and young women of Giles's rank in life under similar circumstances. To keep company with one another is a phrase which every lad and lass in the county of Kent perfectly understands. It scarcely implies that there is any positive love between the parties; it does not include any matrimonial engagement; and it never,

sons for supposing so. When he first formed her acquaintance, she was in the habit of walking a good deal with Tom Overy, the same gay, larking, frolicksome, dissipated youth who had recently acted as Giles's amanuensis. She had danced with him at more than one ball; she evidently preferred his impudent, and therefore brilliant conversation, to that of the villagers in general; and he was several times known to have absented himself from his club at the Black Dog, in order to spend the evening with her. From the day, however, that Giles ventured to warn her against one whose gallantries were as notorious as his mien and form were said to be attractive, she gradually withdrew from his acquaintance, till latterly she saw no more of him—at least, so Giles was assured,—than she did of any other person whom she might chance to meet in passing to and fro about the parish. Now, as Tom was a tailor by trade, and worked at the public board, to which for four days out of the six he was pretty constant, their converse could hardly be of a nature calculated very deeply to interest either party, seeing that it seldom went beyond an exchange of sentences at the open window. As Mary

take one till I can keep her. I
all that I do is keep company
you know there is no harm in that.
Since his father's death, and
the last stage of the old man's illness
been too much occupied with
think much of Mary. Now the
excitement was in some degree
thoughts began to revert into the
channel. He longed to see and
with her, more especially as there
curiosity about him to observe
be received now that he was be-
sort the head of a family. It is
of marriage, at least of immedi-
Giles would have scouted the idea
that he had a great duty to per-
consideration of self could have
for a moment to neglect his
young family. But there is

accustomed route, so as to leave the village considerably to the left, or, as a military man would express himself, to turn it; and light was the bound which carried him over the churchyard wall, at a point where the shadow of a solid buttress skreened him. There was no moon, but the sky was bright and cloudless, and the air so still that not a leafless bough waved; indeed, the only sound discernible was the hum of voices from the street, subdued by distance into notes that were not unmusical. All this was in his favour, for he had given Mary no warning, and he did therefore experience some misgivings lest his signal might not be answered; but he resolved at all events, having gone thus far, to see the adventure out, or at least to make a trial whether her sense of hearing was as acute as her glance was penetrating.

Walking very cautiously under the shadow of the old church, Giles had gained the western extremity of the tower, and was just about to emerge into the open space that lay between him and the vicarage garden, when the whispering of two persons fell upon his ear. He stopped short, and squeezing into the very angle between the building itself and its project-

But he is now a gentleman. The old man is out of the way; he inherits every thing; and the sooner you make up the match with him, the better it will be for your own sake. Besides, can I not see you when you are Mrs. Solley just as often as I did when you were Mary Tapsal?"

Giles felt his brain whirl round when these words were spoken. If any doubt had hitherto rested on his mind, it was now dispelled; and he became assured that there stood before him a scoundrel as black, and a girl as thoroughly corrupted, as the whole county of Kent could produce. He suppressed his feelings, however, to a degree which afterwards astonished himself, and listened while the conversation proceeded.

"Oh, no, no!" replied the girl, labouring, as it seemed, under great emotion; "I am not yet so lost as that comes to. I could not bring disgrace into poor Giles's family; and if I once spoke the word at the altar, no man, not even you, Tom, fatal as to me your tongue has been, would tempt me to forget my vow."

"My dear Mary," rejoined the other, "has all my instruction ended in this? What is it that I have been telling you ever since our

The unfortunate girl had suited the action to the word, and was kneeling before her seducer, of the workings of whose countenance there was not light enough to permit Giles to judge, but whose voice when he spoke was clear, calm, cold, almost exulting.

"Now, Mary, don't give us any more heroics, for God's sake! we had enough of that two nights ago, and you know that I told you then how completely my mind was made up, and that if you did not do as I recommended, I would certainly go for a soldier; for whether the brat be mine or not ——"

"Can you, dare you, breathe a doubt of that?" exclaimed the girl, speaking aloud, and springing to her feet — "Am I then suspected by you? What business have I to live? What is there that I should live for?"

She burst from him as she said this, and made a spring towards the garden wall; but Overy soon overtook her, and leading her back to the spot where they had first stood, made her sit down on a flat tombstone, and placed himself beside her. Their backs were now to Giles; but as they had gradually elevated their voices while the conversation deepened in its interest, he still overheard distinctly every

how can it, when the means are so completely within your reach of putting everything to rights, and yet being to me all that you have ever been? but have a care, Mary; I am not to be trifled with; you know that you are in my power; I have only to be beforehand with you about those tablespoons and the lace veil, and then where are you? Don't drive me to do that which both you and I will repent all our days: but here, before God, I swear——"

"Oh, don't swear, Tom," cried the agitated girl, jumping up, and placing her hand on his mouth; "don't swear, and I will do whatever you wish. It is not that I value character, if I must be separated from you. But oh, have some mercy on me! Do with me what you will; but as you hope for mercy yourself, show some to me!"

She fell upon his neck as she uttered these heartbreaking words, and he embraced her with apparent affection. "Now this," said he, "is what I call coming to reason. Depend upon it, I will do nothing by you but what is for your good; and that the time will come, and shortly too, when you yourself will allow

another his senses were suddenly restored, and he made use of them to flee from the spot where he had seen such sights, and listened to such sounds. Heedless, moreover, of everything except an immediate escape from the churchyard, he took no pains to avoid observation in his retreat, as he had done during his advance. He made at once for a gate that opened into the village, and, dashing through, ran with frantic step towards Crackstakes.

"Holloa, Giles!" exclaimed a voice, which had he kept his senses about him, he would have recognised as that of the steward. "Pretty doings for so quiet a young man,—a nice place the churchyard for a walk by starlight!"

Still Giles ran on, till, suddenly turning a corner, the strong light from a forge fell on him, and as bad luck would have it, there stood Mr. Rigden.

"Why, Giles," cried he, "hast been fighting? Thou art all over blood, man!"

Not a word was uttered by Giles in reply. He ran home, passed through the hall without speaking, took no heed of his mother, or the supper-table spread, or the Bible laid upon

CHAPTER VI.

A SEARCH.

Long before noon on the following day there was indescribable excitement and alarm both at Crackstakes, and throughout the parish of Waltham and the surrounding neighbourhood. At Crackstakes, Giles was nowhere to be found. When the family again rose the hall door was found unfastened. That of his bedroom stood open—but he was not within; while in the middle of the floor lay the smock-frock which he had worn the previous evening saturated with blood. Meanwhile an event neither less looked for, nor less appalling, had occurred elsewhere. Mary Tapsal was missing. Far and near they sought her, but they sought to no purpose. The curate's wife, with whom she lived, could only state that when the bell rang for Mary about ten o'clock she was absent, and that the answer was that she had stepped over to her father's.

The boy who carried this message soon returned with an announcement that Mary had not crossed her father's threshold since the preceding Wednesday, and that if she was not in her master's house her father could not tell where she was. Upon this the housemaid was summoned. At first she repeated the same story which she had told over-night; but being sharply questioned, she soon began to equivocate.

"Indeed, she knew nothing about it. All that she did know was what Mary told her; and she had positively stated that she was going to see her father."

"At what hour did she go out?"

The girl could not exactly tell. It might be nine, or it might be earlier.

"And can you pretend to say, that having gone out at nine, or a little earlier, and being still absent at ten, you either believed at the time, or believe now, that she was gone to her father's?"

"Well, then, if mistress would only forgive her this time, she would confess that Mary sometimes went out to converse with a young man, and that she did go on the previous night for that purpose." But who the young

She will never come to harm if she keep company only with him, or some other of his kind."

"The lad is well enough, sir," replied Tapal; "but I wish that he, or whoever else it may be, that has spirited her away in this manner, would bring her back again, or let us know where he has hidden her."

"I do think," said Mr. Jacobson, speaking in a great measure to himself, "that Giles ought to be here. I remember now, that I have met them frequently together after the evening service on the summer Sundays; and though I acquit him of all wicked designs, still, as he has been in the habit of walking with her openly, it is not beyond the range of possibility that he may have sometimes met her by stealth. Run to Crackstake, Will, and beg Mr. Giles Solley to come down and speak to me as soon as possible."

The boy ran as he was desired, and being, as all youths similarly circumstanced, are apt to be eager to circulate intelligence which had excited astonishment in himself, he took care, while passing through the village, to detail to more than one person considerably more than he knew for fact. Among others he met Mr. San-

“What!” cried Mr. Jacobson, in a shrill tone; “covered with blood!”

“Ay, covered with blood, sir!”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed the curate; “good heavens! But that is quite out of the question! Pooh! pooh! I would as soon believe that I myself had done a thing of the sort, as that Giles Solley did it.”

“That may be, sir,” answered the steward; “but the circumstance must be inquired into at all events. I think we had best send for Mr. Rigden,—I left him scarce a quarter of an hour ago at the saddler’s,—and if his tale corroborate mine, I am sure that you will agree with me in thinking that at least appearances are remarkable.”

Mr. Jacobson could not refuse to act on this suggestion; indeed there was a growing interest in the case which led him on; and he would have doubtless sifted it to the bottom, had his own son been the party to whom suspicion pointed. Mr. Rigden was accordingly sent for; and, on his arrival, fully confirmed all that Mr. Sankey had told. “Nay, more,” he continued; “never in all my life did I see such an expression as was in the young man’s countenance. His cheeks, where they were not be-

smeared with blood, were pale as ashes; and though I called to him by name, he took no more notice of me than if I had been a post. I am always loth to judge my neighbours; but if that poor girl have come by wrong, depend upon it that Giles Solley is in some way or another at the bottom of it."

To summon the constable, and to give him such directions as were not capable of being misunderstood, was now a measure of positive duty. Still, all parties seemed desirous of sparing the feelings of the family; and it was therefore agreed that Messrs. Sankey and Rigden should ride forward, and persuade Giles, if possible, to come willingly to Waltham; and that the force even of legal authority should not be appealed to, except in the last extremity. To Crackstakes the gentlemen accordingly rode: but when they found that Giles was missing,—when they learned in what plight he had come home over-night,—when they saw his bloody garments, and heard that he must have fled while the rest of the family were sleeping, suspicion in both their minds became strong conviction. They shook their heads, and told Mrs. Solley that it was their duty to keep her son's frock.

"For what purpose?" demanded the mother in a calm voice, because perfectly unconseious of any cause of alarm. "Giles will be back, I dare say, by-and-by; and it will be better to get his frock washed and made neat for him against to-morrow."

"Giles will never come back, my good woman," replied the steward, "you may depend upon that; at least till he is brought back. And as to the gaberdine, that must be kept as it is, to serve the ends of justice."

"Of justice!" exclaimed the widow, now greatly agitated; "why what has Giles done to bring him before a justice?"

"I am afraid you will hear that too soon, poor soul!" replied Mr. Rigden. "But in the mean while, you must allow us to search for him through the premises; and here in good time comes the constable, though, indeed, I do not apprehend any opposition from you or Dick."

Again the widow implored them to tell the worst at once, and again they evaded the question; but the constable, who now entered, was not so delicate.

"For the matter o' that," said he, "I dare to say Giles is as innocent as the babby that's

unborn ! but, you see, the thing is as this ; Mary Tapsal, her as he keeps company with, is a missing, you see. Nobody can't find her nowhere ; and Giles was the last that was seen in her company. And, God knows, I don't say it's true—I don't believe it—but this here blood on his gaberdine, and him missing, and her missing—you see it's all very suspicious like. We wants Giles just to clear himself like, and if you knows where he is to be found—Lord deliver us—the woman's dead !”

And dead she was, at least for the moment. The bare possibility of such a charge being brought against Giles—the bare possibility that an unfortunate concatenation of circumstances might tell against him—the bare possibility of her son's danger, perhaps his disgraceful end, went through her brain like a rifle-ball, and she fell prone to the earth. As to his guilt, of that she did not think,—she had not time to think of it ; and if the contrary had been the case, she would not have given the idea an admission into her mind for worlds. But there was consciousness of fearful hazard, of imminent, irresistible, deadly peril, which smote her as with a deadly sickness, and took away all command over her faculties. She was carried to bed in such a

boured for breath, while, after clenching his teeth firmly together, he said:

"By G—! then it was him and her I saw together at the bottom of the meadow below the churchyard. They went into the osier plantation beyond, and I never saw them after."

Instantly a shout arose,—“To the osier-bed to the osier-bed!” Tom was commanded to put himself at their head, and he did so. “Out of which part of the churchyard did he come?” demanded he of Mr. Sankey, who was now returned from Crackstake.

“Out of the little gate directly opposite to my hall-door,” was the reply.

“Then we will enter there,” They did so: they narrowly examined the path, and found here and there a drop of blood. Beyond the north angle of the tower, however, the marks ceased; but that was a circumstance which men so excited were little likely to regard, when following up, what they believed to be another and a surer clue. Under Tom’s guidance they accordingly moved on, till they had passed out by another wicket, and found themselves on a raised path leading through the meadow towards the osier-bed. Slowly and deliberately they pursued it, stopping from

chief torn, and a glove—a small glove, close beside it.”

The men sprang upon the little tumulus. They had no spades: but the miller, by chance, had brought his weed-cutter, and they used it instead of one. The soil was quickly removed; and there, upon her back, disfigured by a hideous gash, which had wellnigh severed the head from the body, lay all that had been mortal of Mary Tapsal. A shrill cry gave notice that the corpse was found, and then there was perfect silence.

CHAPTER VII.

A CORONER'S INQUEST.

"THIS is sad work, neighbours! sad work, indeed!" Mr. Sankey at length exclaimed, "but the hand of God is apparent in it. Blood never has been hidden, and never will be. How mysterious is the power which guided us hither! and how striking the chain of evidence that lays the guilt on the right shoulders. Well, there is but one thing more to do. The poor girl must be carried up to the street, and the coroner hold his inquest; after which we must all bestir ourselves like men to trace the murderer to his hiding-place."

The crowd indicated their assent to these propositions rather by their actions than their words. One or two ran back to the workhouse for the bier belonging to that establishment; while the rest drew the corpse carefully from its slimy bed, and rested it upon a drier part of

the glutation. And now it was that proofs more and more remarkable were afforded of the kind of violence which must have been used towards her. There was the mark of a blow inflicted on the side of the head, as if by some flat instrument, which crushing in the skull must have deprived the ill-fated creature of all power of further resistance. The windpipe was completely severed, and the very cartilages of the spine divided. On examining the ground, moreover, it became evident enough that she must have fallen, and received her last wound, at the point where the blood was first discovered; and that the assassin had afterwards dragged her to the ditch, into which he had cast her. Nor was this all that an investigation of the osier-bed brought to light. Lying apart from the ensanguined spot, as if it had been either cast from the hand, or accidentally dropped, lay a small hammer, similar to that which cobblers are accustomed to use, with a short handle, a heavy head, and a broad and a narrow extremity to the top. A spade was likewise found, apparently hidden among the osiers; on the handle of which were stamped the letters G. I.

"Here is more proof that Heaven's eye is

and all gave precisely the same sort of evidence which they had given when less formally examined ; while the statements of Mr. Sankey, of Mr. Rigden, and others, were well calculated to confirm suspicions that were already rife. Last of all came Tom Overy ; who, by what motive impelled it was hard to say, made no effort to take his place in the room till summoned ; and who, when summoned, appeared willing to turn his back upon a spectacle which, to say the truth, was abundantly shocking. His testimony, however, being justly regarded as even more important than that of the rest, was gone into with even greater solemnity ; and the following is an outline of the manner in which it was given :

“ You were out last night,” said the coroner, “ and returned home by way of the osier-bed. You will be so good as tell these gentlemen where you spent the evening, and what it was that you saw on your return home.”

Tom looked very pale, but his voice did not falter while he answered : “ I went last night to see a friend at Grove, which lies, you know, across the river. I stayed with her till about ten o'clock, and crossed the ferry immediately afterwards. As I passed the osier plantation,

"Really, gentlemen," cried Tom, while a slight shudder ran through his frame, "the whole business is so shocking, that I may have mistaken both the time of night and the dress that the man wore when I met him. All that I can say is, that as I was returning from Grove, I saw two people near the osier-bed, who refused to return my salutation, and that the man wore a gaberdine, but whether it was white or green I will not take upon me to swear, because the night was without a moon and cloudy."

"The night was without a moon certainly," observed Mr. Sankey, "when I left the street at half-past nine; but the stars shone so clear, that I think I should have known whether a man's frock were light or dark of colour at twenty rods' distance."

"When I passed the man and woman," answered Tom, "they were under the shade of the willows; and that made me say the night was cloudy."

"You are quite sure then," demanded the coroner; "that somewhere between nine and eleven you met two people going as if towards the osier-bed?"

"Quite," answered Tom; "indeed you may

and I have never seen it from that day this."

A sort of groan ran through the hall; for the sharp end of the hammer was stained with blood, and some of the hairs from the murdered woman's scalp, still stuck to it.

"Richard Solley must be sent for," said the coroner, and he was sent for; neither did anything of importance occur during the interval for Tom having, as it seemed, answered to the satisfaction of all present, requested permission to withdraw. It was granted, subject however to the condition that as soon as Dick Solley arrived he would return: and when Dick did arrive he was ready to confront him. Dick admitted without an attempt at evasion, that happening to want the hammer for some purposes of his own, he had taken it out of Tom Overy's lodgings; "but I did not keep it three days," continued he; "as soon as Giles found out from whom I had had it, he took it away from me and told me afterwards that he had returned it."

"I will swear that he never returned it to me," said Overy in a firm tone.

There seemed now but one more step to be taken, namely, to clear the apartment for

nearest relatives as to his behaviour there, we have it, at second hand, that it was very extraordinary. But what is most remarkable of all, he is nowhere to be found. This morning, when his relatives seek him in his chamber, they find the horrid garment lying in the middle of the floor, but the man himself is gone. Then, again, we have the evidence of Martha Morrice, a young person in Mr. Jacobson's service, that he was in the habit of keeping company with the deceased; and, finally, the surgeon tells us, that the unfortunate young creature is in the family way. Now, under these circumstances, I think that you can hardly fail of coming to the conclusion that this most cruel murder has been committed for one purpose only, and that the same miscreant who robbed the girl of her innocence has taken away her life. The father of the unborn child has slain the mother, and with her the fruits of his own unholy passion. Now, it is just possible that Giles Solley may not be the seducer of that girl; we have nothing before us to give the certainty that he is; and, were this made evident, strong as are the suspicions on other accounts attaching to him, I should experience some hesitation in advising you to return against

him the verdict of wilful murder. But as he is the only man of whom any mention is made as having ever kept her company, the probabilities, to use no stronger term, are all against it. And that which will, I am sure, weigh most upon your minds is, what has become of him? If he be an innocent man, why get out of the way? If there be no weight of blood upon his conscience, why abandon his home, so soon after his father's decease, while his affairs are yet in so unsettled a state; and, above all, in a manner so mysterious. In spite, therefore, of Thomas Overy's misapprehensions,—misapprehensions which I am sorry to believe originate in habits of dissipation, which he cannot too soon relinquish,—I think that you have but one course to pursue, and that you will make such a finding as shall enable justice to be satisfied in a case as atrocious as has ever come under my notice during twenty years' service as coroner for this county."

After an address like this, only one verdict could be anticipated. The jury did not so much as withdraw; but having whispered one to another for a second or two, the foreman rose, and announced that he and his fellows were satisfied.

“ And what is your verdict, gentlemen ?”

“ Wilful murder against Giles Solley.”

A second deep groan followed this announcement: but there was neither shriek nor other mark of sympathy; for Dick had withdrawn as soon as his evidence had been taken, and there was no one to take the guilty man's part. Indeed, in the crime of murder there is something so revolting to all human feeling, that he who is pronounced guilty seems to lose every hold upon the compassion of his fellow-creatures. When, therefore, the coroner, after commending the jury for their patience, their discrimination, and their judgment, proceeded to make out his warrant, there was no lack of offers to assist in the apprehension of the murderer; and long ere the sun went down, every grove, thicket, lone house, or other probable place of concealment in the neighbourhood, had undergone a search. But of the homicide not a trace could be discovered. All night they sought him in vain. With the dawn of the morrow, fresh pursuers were afield; and as the rumour had already extended to the nearest towns, both inland and coastward, there also hundreds of eyes were busy. Next came the printing of handbills, which contained a de-

Scripture says, ‘Whoso sheddeth man’s blood by man shall his blood be shed;’ and Scripture never yet deceived any one. He who cut that poor girl’s throat will, sooner or later, be brought to justice; for innocent blood cries to Heaven, and its voice pierceth into the clouds!”

thus rejected as a piece of unparalleled presumption. Giles was accused, moreover, very shortly, but very sternly, of making a great deal too free with the characters of his betters; and warned that no man ever thrived who adopted such methods for advancing his own fortune. But all this, which, under other circumstances, would have preyed upon the widow's peace of mind, was now regarded as nothing. Her thoughts were too full of Giles — of the horrible offence of which he stood accused — of the strong suspicions that attached to him, and of the uncertainty of his own fate, to leave either leisure or space for the intrusion of less harrowing sources of uneasiness. The sole proceeding, therefore, after perusing his lordship's letter, was to fold it up again, rather mechanically than with deliberation, and to lay it by in the old linen-chest among other papers which had been deposited there during several generations.

She had scarcely done so, when Mr. Sankey, who, it appeared, had likewise heard from his noble employer by the same post, arrived at Crackstakes. He had never been a favourite with the widow and her late husband, either because he assumed over them a kind of superi-

and he now made her an offer of a neat cottage on his own farm, with a cow's grass, which she could pay for by taking charge of his dairy; while he pledged himself that Dick should never want a day's work, nor the younger children such employment as they might be fit for. There is a power in sorrow to soften the heart as well as to bend the spirit, and Mrs. Solley acceded to his propositions with tears of gratitude; and as the propositions themselves were made in all sincerity, (no matter what motive impelling,) the poor widow, when she thanked him for his unlooked-for kindness, offered him a recompense to which he was justly entitled.

I pass over the few and uninteresting events that occurred at Crackstakes during the interval between bean-sowing and harvest. They were not of such a nature as to require comment, except that they pretty well confirmed the opinion which Mr. Sankey had given of Dick's inability to carry on a farm. What authority, indeed, could a youth of seventeen years of age exercise over his mother's servants? and what else was to be expected of himself, except that, when the impression that had been made, first by his father's death, and next by his brother's flight, wore off, he should become

self. So circumstanced, the widow had little pleasure at Crackstake; and, when Michaelmas came, she made ready to abandon it, almost without regret. I do not mean to say that she experienced no pang when the auction day arrived, and the stock which had so long constituted all the wealth of an honest family passed into strange hands. On the contrary, the jokes that were cracked by the buyers, with the facetious recommendations of the auctioneer, fell upon her ear like discordant notes in music; and more than once her tears mingled with the liquor which it was her business to prepare for her guests. And when all had been cleared off, and there remained only such articles of household furniture as it was judged expedient to remove to the new dwelling, she walked through the half-empty chambers like one walking in a dream. But after this was done, and she found herself settled in a cottage, which, though small, fully deserved the character which Mr. Sankey had given it, her spirits in some degree revived, and she thanked Providence that there was yet a home for the houseless, even while she wept to think that her first-born was not present to share it.

Allusion was made a short time ago to the

reviving intimacy between Dick Solley and Tom Overy. This did not, indeed, occur immediately after the discovery of Mary Tapsal's murder; for Dick, as well as his mother, had received an impression from his proceedings at the inquest, that Tom desired, rather than otherwise, to implicate Giles in the crime. But as weeks and months rolled on, the pliable mind of Dick gradually permitted the suspicion to wear out, till in the end it was completely erased: for Tom appeared to court his society. The one never visited the village without being joined by the other, who seemed anxious to do him all imaginable little favours, and who, without once directly alluding to events that were past, took care to insinuate on all convenient opportunities a thousand reasons why the absentee should not be condemned unheard. A lad of Dick's temperament could not resist advances so artfully made, more especially as there was as great superiority in point of age as in point of skill on Tom's part; and a good deal to the surprise of all, and very much to the regret of many, the two became ere long inseparable companions.

Meanwhile the habits and general demeanour of Overy himself underwent no change for

the better. He had always been what is called fond of company ; he appeared now unwilling to be a moment alone. His trade was more and more neglected every day. To serious topics of conversation he would never so much as pretend to listen ; but in ribald jests he took especial delight, and was admitted by all his acquaintances to excel in the use of them. Even in the midst of these, however, not less than when plying his needle, fits of abstraction would come upon him ; and the colour, now rapidly deepening in consequence of his immoderate addiction to strong liquors, would desert his cheeks. Nay, there were times when a companion might address him without receiving any reply, notwithstanding that his eye rested with a fixed stare all the while on the speaker's face. It was remarked, moreover, that instead of dividing his assiduities, as it were, between the public-house and his gallantries, the latter were wholly omitted. Tom never failed now to make his appearance in the Black Dog so soon as the company began to assemble, and he never quitted it to return home except in a state of beastly intoxication. As a matter of course, both his health and his resources soon began to fail him, for the

mornings which succeeded such nights were utterly useless; nay, existence itself could not have been endured except for the stimulant that was applied to restore the shattered nerves to tone. In one word, Tom had always been considered a wild lad; but he was now looked upon by the respectable inhabitants of Waltham as a ruined man, destitute of conduct, destitute of character, destitute of principle; yet so clever and so agreeable withal, that even of those who condemned, there were several that courted his society.

From what has been said of old Solley's habits it has probably been conjectured, that if he had not saved anything, he was, at all events, free from incumbrances at his decease. The case was so; and his widow found herself in consequence, after the dead and live stock had been sold off, mistress of a sum very little short in amount of two hundred pounds. Savings-banks were in the year 1813 unknown; but the price of corn was then at its height, and the credit of farmers, especially of such as occupied large holdings, was boundless. She was therefore very glad when Mr. Sankey proposed to become her banker, allowing her interest at the rate of five per cent.; and already

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"Why, keep it ourselves, to be sure; won't it be safe in the linen-chest?—or can't we bury it under the hearth? Suppose father's words were to come true, and these gentlemen farmers break up after all,—who would give us back our two hundred pounds then?"

"And suppose any accident were to happen; the house to be burned, or robbed, or I don't know what else,—where would our money be then?"

"Oh, that's all stuff; Crackstakes was neither burned nor robbed, and why should Sheerwater?"

"Mr. Sankey has never failed yet, and why should he now?"

"Well, well, mother, you shall never have my consent to lend your children's money to a man who has not been your children's friend."

"You forget, Dick, that by your father's will I am not obliged to consult my children in the matter. Whatever there is of property is mine while I live, and I may do with it what I like."

"Just as you please, mother; just as you please: but if I am to have no voice in the management of our affairs, I don't see what use I am to be of at home."

"Oh, Dick!" cried his mother, her firm giving way under excited feeling; "it is not thus that Giles used to speak to me, nor you neither when Giles was at home. I know since you took up again with that bad man who did more to bring your brother in trouble than all the world besides, you are entirely altered. Oh, that Giles had never left me!"

"Mother," answered the young man, forcibly suppressing his remorse by giving the reins to a worse temper, "it's no use your constantly casting Giles in my teeth, or lashing out against Tom Overy. Giles has at least not carried away very good name with him, and the less we say about him the better; and as to Tom Overy, I'm d—d if I give up his company for you, or for anybody else."

So saying, the young man flung out of the house, hastened down to Waltham, found his friend Tom at the shop-window, invited him out to take a walk, and adjourned with him to the Black Dog. Their carouse that night was deep and long continued, and Dick Sol was pronounced by the assembled party a most excellent fellow. He was formally admitted member of the club, and became liable to

CHAPTER IX.

HUCKSTERING.

WHEN a young man, who has attained to the age of eighteen, fairly gives himself up to the guidance of a depraved companion of three or four and twenty, whatever influence his widowed mother may have once exercised over him is soon broken through. The scene which I described in the last chapter as occurring once began to occur, in Dick's case, periodically. To be sure, he went to his work in the field by day; and Mr. Sankey, though the two hundred pounds were not committed to his keeping, did not forget his pledge to employ him. It may be true, indeed, that for this he deserved small thanks; because, in 1813 and 1814, the demand for labour was everywhere greater than the supply, and farmers were very ready to shut their eyes at a few irregularities in their men's conduct rather

of labour ceased, till they met again next morning at breakfast ; and his pale brow and shaking hand made her then too surely aware of the manner in which, for the most part, the night had been spent. For among other privileges on which he insisted, and which he eventually contrived to extort, Dick obtained possession of the key ; so that he was able to let himself out or in at all hours, without disturbing any one. Alas ! Sheerwater was not to the poor widow what Crackstake had been, where many an hour she spent in secret weeping, while she watched over the slumbers of her yet innocent children, and prayed to God, either that they might continue so, or else die before they were corrupted.

I spoke in the last chapter of a discussion which occurred between Dick and his mother relative to the best mode of disposing of the proceeds of the sale of the effects. It is hardly necessary to add, that though apparently worsted on that occasion, Dick gained his end at last. The money was not intrusted to Mr. Sankey's keeping. Having been put up in a pocket-book, the notes (for paper-money of local issue was then the current coin of the realm) were safely deposited in the linen-chest, which stood in

the widow's chamber, and of which she always carried the key ; and the family, without any ostensible reason, were thereby impoverished to the amount of ten pounds a year. But it was not to accomplish this alone that Dick made so determined a stand against the lending system. He discovered by degrees, that if the whole, or even a part, of the treasure were embarked in some trade, it would be far more advantageously disposed of than in the chest ; and he began to hold conferences with his mother on the subject. " To be sure, he had not learned any trade, — he was neither a tailor nor a shoemaker ; — and as to a shop, there were too many of them in the parish already. But he fancied that he was something of a judge of stock, whether pigs, sheep, cattle, or horses ; and he was sure that a great deal was to be made in the jobbing line : at all events it was worth trying. The Easter fair was on the morrow ; and if his mother would only let him have fifty pounds, he was confident that he might make some purchases, out of which a handsome profit would be turned by-and-by ; and he was quite ready to give her his note of hand, if indeed she thought it necessary to demand any security from him."

Mrs. Solley was not blind either to the probable advantages or the risks of such a system of trading, even when carried on by persons of experience. It might succeed, it often did succeed ; and success, when attained, was for the most part ample. But it might likewise fail ; and exposed as the jobber was to every imaginable temptation of excess, and to every conceivable hazard of deception, failure in the case of a very young or a very wild speculator, was almost sure to occur. She did not, therefore, enter into Dick's views with the alacrity which he anticipated, but rather strove to divert him from his purpose by speaking of the possible return of times when the contents of the chest might be laid out on stock for a new farm. Dick, however, scouted the idea of such a thing. "Don't you see that it is becoming more and more impossible every day? Why, there is not now one small farm left in all the parish, whereas even since my memory there were several. No, no, mother ; we must either be content to drudge on as day-labourers, or we must make an effort in some other way to better our condition ; and I cannot see a nicer opening than that of which I have just spoken. Tom

the fifty pounds, or must I borrow it elsewhere ; for to the Easter fair I am determined to go as a purchaser, and nobody shall hinder me !”

“Dick, you will break my heart if you go on thus. Who has taught you to make light of the Word of God ? Is that one of Tom Overy’s lessons, too ?”

“I didn’t make light of the Word of God,” answered Dick sullenly ; for, dissipated as he had become, he was not, at least in his sober hours, a positive blasphemer ; “I only meant to say that we were not then discoursing about the Scriptures, but about pigs and oxen ; and that there was a good opening for me to benefit both you and myself, if I had but the money.”

“Well then, Dick, I tell you that I can’t consent to give to you what is not mine to give. You hindered me from putting out the money to use, where I am sure that it would have been safe ; but I am not going to let you throw it away on speculations which will never end in good.”

“Very well, mother ; again I say, please yourself : but if you think to stop me by such means from embarking in an honest business,

mark. He therefore continued, in a tone of rail-lery :—" Because it would be a capital joke to take out the pocket-book and to keep it for a couple of days, and when you gave it back again to show her how very easy it would have been for you, had you felt so disposed, to use all her money, instead of a part, to her advantage. But I suppose that's not to be done; and if it were, it wouldn't serve our purpose for the present. Let's see— what shall we do?"

" I thought you said," replied Dick, restored to confidence by Overy's adroit mode of turning aside his original insinuation, " that some of the higglers would give credit, provided they were assured that the purchaser had money."

" So I did," answered Tom; " and so they will, I make no doubt. But how are we to satisfy them that *you* have money?"

" Why, all the parish knows that father died worth something; and that, at mother's death, if it don't happen sooner, I must get my share."

" Ah, but higglers are not accustomed to wait for dead men's shoes, nor dead women's neither. No, Dick, that won't do at all; but I think I know what will."

that his friend might let out, when under the influence of liquor, some portion, if not all, of their delectable schemes. Nay more, Dick returned home at an unusually early hour; and though he excused himself from reading the Bible or performing family worship, he appeared in other respects so much like what he used to be, that his mother's fears of his ultimate ruin received at least a momentary interruption. Not a word was said touching the jobbing scheme on either side; and the parting, when the hour of slumber came, might almost be said to have been affectionate. But Dick was in all this evincing nothing more than the aptitude with which he had studied in the school of Tom Overy. His were hypocritical professions of love; for on the morrow he was up betimes, dressed, breakfasted, and on his way to the fair.

"Don't you go to work to-day, Dick?" said his mother beseechingly, as his figure darkened the doorway.

"I think not," was the reply; but it was uttered so hurriedly, that the poor woman scarcely understood it; and she resumed her accustomed duties, ignorant of her son's designs. In due time, however, these developed

themselves. About noon one person arrived driving a couple of swine before him; by-and-by came a boy with a cow and calf; then followed a small flock of ten or twelve prime fat tags; and, last of all, a blood filly.

"In the name of fortune," demanded the widow, "what is to be done with all these? To whom do they belong, and where do they come from?"

"As to the matter of that," replied the parties questioned, "it is none of our business what you do with them. Your son has bought them at the fair, and we expected to find him here before us to pay for them; but as he is not at home, we are willing to leave the payment till to-morrow. If you will show us where to put them, we will be glad to get rid of them, for we have more stock in the market."

"Put them," cried she, "I have nowhere to put them. Pray, pray take them away again, for Dick does not want anything of the kind, and has no money to make such purchases."

The men stared at one another, and seemed for a moment irresolute; till one whispering to the rest, they only smiled, and assured Mrs. Solley that they would take their chance of payment. In a word, finding no better pen within

which to enclose them, the animals were driven into her little garden, out of which, in the course of ten minutes, they rooted every vegetable and flower that grew there. It was to no purpose that she protested against the arrangement; the salesmen were resolute, and left her in a state of mind which it would not be easy to describe.

The day wore on, and some time after night-fall Dick made his appearance. He was heated with spirits, excessively irritable, and would not listen to the arguments or entreaties of his mother for a moment. "He told her how it would be beforehand. He had only kept his word, and, so help him God! he would always keep it. The stock was got on credit, to be sure; but he had made a capital bargain, and if she didn't choose to share the risk, she should not share the profit."

It would have been useless to protract discussion with a young man so infatuated. The family accordingly retired to bed; but with the morrow came a new scene to be enacted: the sheep were all gone; the swine, the cow, and the filly alone remained; and the sheep as well as these must be paid for immediately. I need not prolong this portion of

my history. After much hesitation, much remonstrance, much recrimination, and some tears, Dick prevailed. Fifty pounds were given to him out of the common stock ; and he entered, with good apparent credit, on a new career of life.

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CHAPTER X.

THE JOBBING LINE.

HAD all other circumstances favoured him, Dick Solley could have scarce commanded success, owing to the unfortunate period at which he began business. Peace was proclaimed; and with it came a reduction in the prices of agricultural produce of all descriptions, such as no human being seems ever to have anticipated. Corn fell, at a blow, from one hundred to seventy shillings per quarter; sheep, that had been purchased for three pounds in the spring, would not now fetch forty shillings; and cattle, pigs, poultry, wool, tallow, hides, all kept pace with them. The most remarkable change of all, however, was in the price of hops. Many persons had refused to sell in November, because the brokers offered only six-and-twenty pounds; they would have now gladly disposed of all their stock at ten pounds,

way of settling accounts. He spoke of the necessity under which he lay of refunding the fifty pounds to his mother, and of the wisdom of doing so out of his earliest profits; and even went so far as to demand from Tom what he could bring in to enlarge the common stock. Tom smiled while he answered:

“I can bring that, Dick, of which you possess little, but without a fair quantity of which no business can thrive. I can keep accounts, which you cannot, at least such accounts as the jobbing line produces; and I have some notion that you won’t be the worse of a head to help you, that knows how to concoct schemes and humbug flats.”

Dick was not quite sure, at first, how he ought to receive this half-contemptuous reply; but, as I have elsewhere stated, his disposition was as pliable as that of his companion was subtle and designing: the discussion ended, therefore, as might have been expected, in a solemn compact of profit and loss between the negotiating parties.

Having fairly embarked in business for himself, Dick, as in duty bound, ceased to work for Mr. Sankey; and, under the direction of his amiable partner, proceeded to make arrangements

tained no doubt of being able to go on, and of realizing a snug profit in the end.

It is not much the custom in conducting agricultural business either to seek or to give protracted credit; and, among jobbers especially, all bargains are supposed to be for ready money. Our young traders so far acted on this principle that they never sold without receiving cash in hand, though in their purchases they might not be quite so particular. To be sure, they professed to stand in no need of trust; neither would they take it in the ordinary way, for if they had not the bank-notes immediately about them, they were always ready to grant bills: but as these were invariably taken up as soon as they became due, an impression rapidly got abroad of their punctuality; for I need not add, that of all classes of persons, none are so ready to believe the best of the solvency of their neighbours and customers as agriculturists. Then, indeed, they found it easy enough, whether their purses happened to be full or empty, to lay in stock of every description; till at last they determined to take higher ground in their calling, and to buy and sell by commission. The consequence was, that Dick began by degrees to enlarge the circle of

premises, which were by far too narrow. Tom readily agreed to go into the whole matter, though at the same time he assured his friend that there was no necessity for taking so much trouble.

"Hadn't they examined the books only last Saturday, and was it not quite clear that, taking into account the value of the stock in hand, they were clear gainers by a hundred pounds and more?"

Dick had no doubt that it was so, yet he did wish to balance the accounts; and the last evening in the current week was fixed upon for the important undertaking.

The eventful evening at length arrived; and Dick, who, though little at home, had behaved of late with something like his wonted attention to his mother, took his evening meal with her and his brother and sister, preparatory to his adjournment to Tom Overy's lodgings. He did not scruple, while at table, to mention the sort of business in which he was going to be engaged, and spoke confidently of the report which he should be enabled by-and-by to bring back. His mother shook her head.

"Now, mother," said Dick, "this is not fair in you at all. Remember how you opposed

the scheme when I first brought it forward: and yet you yourself have allowed since, that it was a wiser one than you anticipated. Why then should you doubt the result of to-night's operations?"

"Because, Dick, I have never had but one opinion on the subject. So far your scheme may have answered that it has kept you pretty much from the "Free-and-easy," and by giving you constant employment has hindered you from becoming a complete sot: but as to your profits, my boy, I have heard of them to be sure, more than once, but I have never seen them. The fifty pounds that I lent you to begin upon has not yet been paid back."

"Oh! never mind that matter. Like the talent in the New Testament that made five talents, your fifty has more than tripled itself, and when it is paid back, which will I hope, be to-morrow, it shall be paid with excellent interest. So don't condemn either me or my scheme till you know the result."

"I don't condemn you, Dick, not even your scheme. It may be, and I trust it will prove, all that you anticipate; but I wish you had a better partner, that's all."

"Mother," said Dick, somewhat sternly—for he was singularly jealous of his partner's reputation,—“it does not become you, who make so much profession of religion, to condemn any man because he may have once deserved censure. It is a long lane that has no turning; and though I allow that Tom likes his glass, I have never seen about him anything to justify a suspicion of his honesty. I am sure of one thing, that without so clever a fellow to help me, I never could have been in the situation that I am in now.”

“Well, Dick,” said his mother kindly, as her son rose to fulfil his engagement, “I hope it is as you say, and I am sure you would not say so if you did not think it. But whether I be right or wrong, don't be angry with me; for God knows I have but one wish upon earth,—and that is, to see my children thriving and respected.”

“No, no! my dear mother,” answered Dick, softened at once by this appeal, “I am not angry; it would ill become *me* to be angry with *you*: but you will oblige me very much by ceasing to speak ill of Tom, even if you continue to think it. I am so closely connected with him now, that were all that you suspect

not cleared with a little gin ; and one's hand shakes so that it is no easy matter to hold a pen. D— me if I can stand it. Let's go to the Dog, and have a drink first ; and when we are steadied a bit, we can return to this cursed job."

"No, Tom," replied Dick ; "let's get the job over first ; or, if you must have a drink, send to the Dog for a bottle of stuff ; and I'll join you in a dram."

The hint was promptly taken. The landlady, hurrying across the way, soon returned with a pint and a half of Hollands, and the friends swallowed a glass or two by way of clearing their heads. Tom, indeed, drank so much, that his partner, who was really anxious to ascertain how their accounts stood, remonstrated with him ; but Tom had abstained for several hours, and was, therefore, not in a condition to be easily discomposed. The spirits took no more effect upon him than to brace his nerves and to uncloud his brain ; indeed, it seemed as if there only needed this stimulus to restore him to his accustomed superiority over his more cautious companion : for though, at the opening of the scene, Dick had a manifest advantage, it ceased the instant that the spirit of his

had opened an account with Messrs. Waterline, Stamps, and Co.—and ascertained to his surprise and dismay, that they had overdrawn one hundred and ten pounds. To be sure, there was, to set against all this, nine prime bullocks; fifteen year-old tags; three swine, one with a litter of seven pigs; and fodder to the value of nearly four pounds. But the rent of the meadows was due, amounting to five pounds; and Dick had not accounted to Mr. Sankey for the proceeds of a sale which he had effected for him to a considerable amount at the last Ashford market.

“Good God!” exclaimed Dick, not more surprised than unmanned; “what does all this mean? I thought you told me that the balance was greatly in our favour. I thought you had summed up the books every Saturday night.”

“And so I did, my dear fellow,” was Tom’s answer. “Deuce take me if I can account for this state of things at all. To be sure, there is no guarding against deaths; and we have had the worst of times to contend against; but I did not think our concern was so bad as this.”

“Why, we are—let me see—one hundred and seventeen pounds worse than we were at

“Here, take another glass; and then let us set these books on one side, and consider this matter.”

Dick drank; and the effect of potations so often repeated was exactly such as, under like circumstances, it is apt to be. He took after each bumper not a more satisfactory, but a more gloomy view of the state of his own affairs, mixed, however, with an earnest desire, by any method, or at any sacrifice, to retrieve them. Like his companion, he scouted the idea of winding up, and taking advantage of the Insolvent Act. He would not be the laughing-stock of the parish, nor would he consent to let his mother crow over him, as she certainly would do whenever the truth came to be known. No, they must hold on a little longer; and, by some desperate plunge, either get out of the mess at once, or go to the dogs in earnest. But how could they hold on?

“There would have been no question about that to-night, Dick, if your mother had behaved to you as she ought to have done at the outset. Instead of fifty, had she given you the whole two hundred, what a business we might now have had! And even that fifty was given in such a way that no good could come

preach to the winds as try to come over the old woman. No, if it were possible to get at the notes without her finding it out ; but that, I suppose, is quite out of the question ?”

“ No, no, Tom,” replied Dick, somewhat sobered by this proposition. “ Hang it, I can’t stand that ! Rob one’s own mother !—No, no, Tom, that won’t do—at no rate.”

“ Of course not ; I did not suppose it would. I only hinted that, instead of fighting and brawling with the old lady, it might be as well—since you seemed determined to have the money—to get it quietly ; always providing that it shall be repaid out of the very first cash that we handled.”

“ Well, but would not that be robbery to all intents and purposes ?” asked Dick doubtfully.

“ Why, no ; I don’t exactly see that,” replied his companion. “ When a man robs, he takes money or goods without having any intention whatever of restoring them, and he takes them from a stranger. But one’s father and mother are in some sort bound to assist one in business ; and if we cannot get help from them without causing a quarrel, I think that it is better to borrow quietly than to bully

difficulty in taking it away from her bedside than I have in swallowing this drop of jackey. Don't talk to me about danger, and juries, and such like trash."

"Dick, I hope you will not do anything of the kind."

"Not do it! d—n me, I'll do it this very night! d—n me, I'll do it this moment! The old lady is fast asleep by this time; and as she always lays her pockets on the chair beside the bed—Come, Tom, have you the courage to go with me?—I'll take the money—you shall receive it—and when the morrow comes we shall be all smooth again."

"I have no objection to see you home, Dick," was the reply; "but as to being concerned in this robbery——"

"Why, you son of a gun!" exclaimed Dick, "did not you yourself assure me, not five minutes since, that it would be nothing of the sort? But never mind; robbery or no robbery, I want a hundred and fifty pounds; I know where they are to be had, and my name's not Dick Solley if I don't get them before I sleep."

He rose as he spoke, and his companion rose with him. They shut up the books and

put them by ; and then, sallying forth arm-in-arm, they proceeded towards Sheerwater. No conversation occurred to interrupt the current of their respective thoughts, of whatever nature these might be, till they found themselves in front of the cottage door, and Dick had his pass-key in his hand.

"Now Dick, my lad," whispered Overy, "take my advice, and proceed no farther in this business. Go to bed and sleep upon it. If you be in the same mind to-morrow, we can talk the plan over ; but to-night——"

"Just be so good as hold your d—d botheration tongue," replied Dick, "and go round to the back of the house. Take your station under the window nearest to the west gable ; and wait there till you see or hear from me again."

Dick, softly unlocking the door, entered as he spoke ; while Tom, obeying the directions given, walked round to the back of the house. He had not stood there five minutes when the lattice above was cautiously opened.

"Hist ! hist ! Tom,—art there ?"

"Yes," was the answer, delivered in an audible whisper.

"Look out then, and catch ; and expect me to-morrow immediately after breakfast."

Something dropped from the hand of the speaker, which Tom Overy eagerly caught. It was a pocket-book. He thrust it into his bosom, and without waiting to hear the lattice closed, set off with a wary but rapid step towards the village. There was a slight noise of a hinge turning in its socket, and all was perfectly still.

CHAPTER XI.

WINDING UP AFFAIRS.

THE following morning was far advanced ere Dick Solley quitted his chamber; and when he joined his mother in the room which served both as kitchen and hall, he looked ill and unhappy. He ate little breakfast; his hand shook, his cheek was very pale, and his manner even more confused than she had previously seen it after the most lengthened debauch. She strove to draw him out of himself, and to divert his thoughts into a more agreeable channel. Instead, therefore, of reproaching him with what she took it for granted had been the tenor of his overnight's proceedings, she endeavoured to renew the subject of his trading speculations by asking him what had, after all, been the result of the examination which he had quitted her with the intention of making. A more unfortunate

chord, under existing circumstances, could not have been struck. Dick coloured to the eyes; and, scarce knowing how to meet the question, continued silent.

"I am afraid, Dick," continued the widow, "that my anticipations of that matter are more likely to be realised than yours. Jobbing is not, I suspect, so profitable a business as you fancied; and the fifty pounds would have been as well in the chest as scattered here and there and everywhere."

"Mother," replied Dick, lashing up his remorse into anger, "whatever may be the upshot of that adventure, I owe nothing to you at all events. You gave the fifty pounds, when you did give them, with such bad will, that all sense of obligation was destroyed; and now you throw in my teeth that to you I am indebted for the means of beginning business."

"Now, Dick," replied his mother, mildly, "you know that this is neither fair nor generous. I admit that I gave the money reluctantly, but there was no bad grace in the matter. And if it be lost, as I dare say it is, how can you say that I either throw, or mean to throw, the misfortune in your teeth?"

justice to Dick were I to insinuate that he either enjoyed his mother's manifest distress, or was indifferent to it; on the contrary, there was a swelling at his heart which it required no slight exertion of self-control to keep under,—which was not kept under at last without excessive agony. But there were worse agents busy with him at the same time. Remorse,—horrid remorse, when he reflected on his last act overnight;—a vague fear, he scarce knew of what, as he looked forward to the future: these, with a sort of half-formed conviction that neither guilt nor impudence could now carry him over the difficulties that stood in his way, rendered him not merely unhappy, but desperate. He averted his eyes from his mother's condition, and flinging from the door, walked with uneasy steps towards Waltham.

The first place to which he made his way was the Black Dog. His nerves were all unstrung; and without, what in the phraseology of the tap-room is called, a hair of the dog that bit him, he knew that he would be quite unfit for business. He swallowed his noggin, and was refreshed; and now, having paid the reckoning, he was about to proceed to Tom's lodgings, when the landlord spoke.

"Have Tom and you changed places, Dick?" said Boniface.

"Changed places!" replied Dick; "what do you mean?"

"Why, I ask whether you are to be the stay-at-home this half-year and Tom the gad-about; for he started on the Telegraph two hours ago, as he said, for Romford market."

"Pooh, pooh! that's stuff!" replied Dick, while at the same time a chill for which he could not account ran through his veins. "Tom and I had an appointment this morning, for which, by the way, I am a little too late, but which will keep him at home till I join him."

"Egad! if you expect to find him down the way, you will be confoundedly deceived! I tell you he went up by the Telegraph this morning, and didn't say when he'd be back."

Dick did not delay to hear more: he hurried to Tom's lodgings, desired to see him; and learned from his landlady, not only that he was gone, but that he had taken all his clothes with him."

"And when did he say he would return?"

"He said nothing about that, you see; and, by the same token, I should not wonder if he

Dick made no answer. upon him so heavy, that it his faculties. There was in of calm that attends a con ruin; for he neither question disputed the justice of her in an effort even to persuade him ner had been libelled. In ord told that it is customary for rui lieve at the outset the amount that presses them down; they probabilities, then the possibili frequently the chances themsel partner elopes with the money t firm, the deserted parties presu merely gone for a season, and l day, for his return, till they exp misery of hope deferred. But n sort occurred in Dick's case: he a glance, that he was in

wards. He did so, indeed, rather mechanically than designedly; for he had no plans arranged, nor was he in a condition to arrange them. Yet he reached Sheerwater in less than an hour from the period at which he had quitted it, and found his mother in some sort recovered from her distress, and busy preparing to go to church. Dick gazed upon her with a vacant stare, and passed on towards his chamber; but there was in that stare so much of meaning,—it told a tale of grief so deep-seated, of despair so profound, that in a moment his mother had cast from her her cloak and bonnet and held him in her embrace.

“Dick, you are a ruined man; I see that you are,” cried she, “and you are, what is worse, a desperate man. You must not continue in that frame of mind. I am your mother. I brought you with pain and much suffering into the world; I watched over your cradle in infancy; I supported your steps in childhood; I have never been other than a mother to you since. Open out your bosom to me, my boy, for if all the world forsakes you, I cannot. Tell me what has happened,—tell me all!”

“Oh, mother!” exclaimed Dick, dropping

into a chair and covering his face with his hands; "do not kill me with these words of kindness. Reproach me, pour out abuse upon me,—tell me that I have ruined you and my little brother and sister, and cast from me the good name that used to belong to my family. Do this, and more than this,—I can bear it; but do not speak to me in the language of pity, far less of kindness."

"My poor, unhappy boy!" cried the widow, placing herself beside him, and clinging affectionately round his neck; "can you believe me capable of heaping reproach on my own son, now that misfortune has brought him back to his senses, and he is going to be all that I could have wished him to have been from the beginning? Oh, Dick! it is well to be seen that you have not lately read the Scriptures, otherwise the parable of the prodigal would have been in your mind, and you would have known that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

Dick could not reply to this appeal, but groaned heavily; upon which his mother immediately continued,

"I see how it is: Tom Overy has deceived

you. You have been led into a business that, even in the best of times, was very precarious ; and you find, on looking to your accounts, that you have lost your all. This is bad, I know ; but you must bear it, my boy. Young people never think so much of experience as after they have paid a large price for it ; and if these losses have the effect of weaning you from bad company, not only shall I never regret them, but I will thank God that they have happened ; and as to the fifty pounds——”

“ Mother, you will drive me mad !” interrupted Dick, recalled by that allusion to a full sense of the worst passage in his own career, of which a strange forgetfulness had crept over him ; “ if there were no more than these fifty pounds to regret the loss of, I could bear that, because I should consider that I had only got my share of the property too soon, and wasted it. But that is not the worst. Oh, no, no !”

“ Then what is, my son ? Tell me the worst, for I can bear it ; and you will never know a moment’s peace till you have completely unbosomed yourself. You have contracted debts, large debts, and have not the means of meeting them ?”

"I have, indeed, mother ; but bad as that is, even that is not the worst."

"God of heaven, boy !" shrieked his mother, "unless you intend me to die upon the spot, speak out at once. What have you done ? Are your hands also red with blood ? Am I going to lose both my sons, and to be in both utterly disgraced ?"

"No, mother, no ; thank God ! not that," replied Dick, receiving comfort from the allusion to a crime even more heinous than that of which he had been guilty. "My hands are not red with blood ; and if no other offence than murder can bring irretrievable disgrace on the family, by me at least, no, nor by Giles neither, has it been disgraced."

"Well, then," rejoined the widow, on whom the same sort of principle operated as had just had a tendency to soothe her son's agitation—"do not hesitate to speak out. So long as you have not committed murder, and by doing so put your own life in jeopardy, you cannot tell me anything which I shall not be able to hear with patience."

Dick made an effort, cleared his throat, raised himself on his seat, but almost immediately fell back again.

"It won't do, mother; I cannot make a clean breast at this moment. By-and-by you shall hear all; and then I know what you will think of me. In the mean time I have only to say that I am indeed entirely ruined. There are liabilities out against that cursed partnership for more than a hundred and twenty pounds; and the rascal into whose hands I put myself is off this morning, nobody knows where, by the Telegraph. Oh, that I had taken your advice when you first gave it! I should not now be sitting in this miserable plight, nor you trying to cheer where you have the best right to condemn."

"This is indeed a bad business, Dick," said his mother; "but I own to you, it is not much worse than I expected. I was sure that Tom Overy would make a tool of you. Upwards of a hundred and twenty pounds!—that is a great amount, Dick; but we must not permit the good name of the Solleys to be disgraced. God knows whether I have a right to do so; yet I think your father would have done it had he been alive, and I am sure Giles, if he were here, would give his sanction to it. A hundred and twenty pounds! Well, well, no matter; we must not disgrace ourselves."

The widow rose as she said this, and walked up stairs towards her chamber; while Dick, though fearfully conscious of the purport of her journey, had neither the courage nor the strength to detain her. He sat, on the contrary, like one bereaved of muscular power, in the arm-chair, listening to her footstep on the wooden staircase, as the condemned criminal may listen to the gaoler's tread on the morning fixed for his execution. And now the latch of the chamber-door was raised; and now her shoes creaked along the floor overhead; and now he heard the key applied to the lock of the chest, and the lid thrown up with a bang, which caused it to strike against the wall. A pause then ensued, during which the only sound that smote upon Dick's organs of hearing was the beating of his own heart. But that ended at last; and then there was uttered a scream, so shrill, so wild, so harrowing, that spell-bound as he had hitherto been, Dick awoke as from a trance. He ran up stairs; he rushed into the chamber, and reached his mother just in time to catch her as she sank towards the floor.

"You know the worst now, mother," exclaimed he in a hoarse, choking, and desperate voice. "The pocket-book is gone, and all its contents. It was I that took it. I, your own

son, robbed you no later than last night, and gave all to that miscreant who has gone off with it. Now then, mother,—now what say you?"

"What I would have said," replied the widow, recovering her composure in the most surprising manner, "had you spared me this shock by speaking out, when I implored you to do so, down stairs. Even this is scarcely more than I expected from such a connexion. I did not, indeed, think that your own mother would have been the victim; but I should tell an untruth if I denied that from day to day I have expected to hear of some robbery, or theft, or fraud, which would send you both to Maidstone, if it did not bring you to the gallows!"

"I thought it would be so," replied Dick, his manner acquiring somewhat of the rigidity which used to adhere to it previous to the discovery of his partner's treason: "I had no right to expect that you would act otherwise by me; and I am quite ready to give myself up, were it only that I might have the satisfaction of implicating that scoundrel in my crime and in its punishment."

"Dick," was his mother's answer, "you cannot for a moment suppose that *I* am going to proceed against *you*, even for this; no, not if I were sure of getting you off, while we hanged

your accomplice, would I so far debase myself. Neither is it for you to speak of vengeance on a man whose character was no secret to you before you became connected with him, and to whose acquaintance you would adhere in spite of all my remonstrances. No, my son ; I must now make use of your own expression, and say, ' what is done, cannot be undone.' The little property that belonged to me, and to your brothers and your sister, is gone ; nor would any proceedings against your betrayer enable us to get it back again. Besides, your good name is still of some value ; and even now, if the memory of this black deed keep you what you ought to be in future, it may be a blessing in God's hands. But you must bear with me if I find it difficult all at once to overcome my feelings. I will do so as soon as I can ; for the present I am not myself. Go, and leave me here ! I will open my mind to God in prayer, and he will give me strength."

Dick left his mother, as he was desired to do, and returned to the kitchen. How he spent the next half-hour it is scarcely necessary to state : as for his mother, with her it was a period of deep, fervent, sincere, and therefore hallowed devotion.

CHAPTER XII.

BAD TIMES.

For some time previous to the occurrence of the events recorded in the preceding chapter, there had prevailed in and around Waltham suspicions touching the solvency of the jobbing partnership, of which Dick was not aware. It appeared that the bankers, though they had not actually refused any check, were of late slow, and, as it seemed, shy of paying; persons from whom stock had been got on credit were scarcely satisfied, because shorter accounts were not kept; and the landlord, from whom the meadows were hired, had given warning that he expected to be paid half-yearly. Of this seeming distrust of his and his partner's integrity, Dick was profoundly ignorant, because, as I stated some time ago, it belonged to his department to look after the more distant traffic, while Tom managed entirely the domestic concerns.

No sooner did the report spread abroad, however, that Tom was gone, than creditors of all descriptions made their appearance. Sheerwater was beset from morning to night. One brought a promissory note which had been due a week, and demanded payment ; a second was sure that Mr. Richard Solley would not fail to give cash for the pig which he had got from a poor widow three weeks ago ; a third clamoured for the odds which had been promised in swapping a four-year old colt for a brood-mare ; and a fourth did not care a button, but if he were not paid for his sheep he would see what the law could do, and maybe Dick should go to prison. Among others who arrived in the course of Monday morning was Mr. Sankey. He had entrusted Dick with five capital bullocks, each worth fifteen pounds if it was worth a farthing ; and though they were all sold, and sold well too, he had never fingered a farthing of the money. Dick, as may be imagined, was not at home when any of these visitors called : and the rest, after giving vent to certain oaths and opprobrious epithets, withdrew ; but Mr. Sankey sat down in the kitchen, and began to discuss the question with Dick's mother.

"I am not going to be put off at this rate, Mrs. Solley," said he; "I think I have done pretty well for your family, without submitting patiently to be diddled out of my money by any member of it; and therefore, if the cost of these beasts be not paid, amounting at the lowest calculation to seventy-five pounds, you may depend upon it that I will proceed against your son as a swindler."

"Would to God that I had the means of paying, Mr. Sankey!" replied the widow; "you should not have to ask twice for your money."

"As to that," was the rejoinder, "we all know that you *have* the means; and though I can't say that the whole sum belongs to Dick, still, as he will by-and-by be entitled to his share, I think it would be no more than common honesty if you were to give it up now—at least in part payment."

"The share of what?" asked the widow.

"Of the two hundred pounds, to be sure, which you once talked of committing to my care; but which, thank God, as things have turned out, I never fingered. Dick's share of that comes, I take it, to fifty; and if I had that much, I could wait for the remaining twenty-five."

"Then you don't know the full amount of our misfortunes, Mr. Sankey?" replied the widow. "In an evil hour, I let him have the use of those two hundred pounds, and the whole is gone, and we are literally beggars."

At this intelligence Mr. Sankey lost all patience. He rose from his seat; stamped with his foot upon the ground; swore that he would have revenge, let the expense be what it might; and warned Mrs. Solley that she should not remain in his house beyond next Thursday, which was Michaelmas-day. It was to no purpose that the widow endeavoured to soothe and to conciliate; the more she spoke in mitigation of his anger, the more fiercely the flame burned; till, finding that neither arguments nor tears availed, she held her tongue. Unfortunately for her, half a year's rent was due, that is to say, the half-year's nominal rent which, on entering, had been settled between them, with the distinct understanding, however, that it should be worked out at the dairy, where her attendance had been both regular and highly beneficial. But as there was no written agreement on this head, Mr. Sankey did not scruple, in his wrath, to act as if no agreement existed. On Michaelmas-day an execution was accordingly put

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the applications of the young and the healthy, but refused them peremptorily both relief and employment. For a while the lusty paupers bore with the repulse; but the demands of hunger were pressing: they ascertained that an appeal lay from the parish vestry to the bench of magistrates, and to the magistrates their complaints were carried.

A great deal has been said of the shameful prodigality with which these rural magnates disposed of the property of their neighbours. I have no intention of becoming their champion; for I believe that they were at the beginning of the peace, and for many years after, by far too apt to listen to the pauper's tale. But let it be remembered, in mitigation of this error, that the rural aristocracy had never beheld among their tenants the faintest symptom of straitened means; and that at the very moment when he was refusing either to relieve or employ some applicant for food, the parish overseer was drinking his port wine and driving his wife to church in his chaise. Neither did there seem to be any moderation in the farmer's views. He drove the petitioner from him as if he had been an animal of an inferior order; and bade him steal, starve, or hang

himself, for he should have no relief from the parish. Now, an English gentleman may commit mistakes, but he is almost always generous and high-minded. He could not endure to see the peasant thus browbeaten; and thinking, if he said it not, that the oppressor was little if at all superior to the oppressed, he stood between the latter and his imaginary wrongs with more of chivalry than of strict justice. Had he lowered his own rents at the time that he was making out orders for relief upon the parish officers round him, nobody could have blamed him for such orders. In that case the expense would have come ultimately, if not directly, out of his own pocket. But this he forgot to do; and the consequence was, an excessive and sudden pressure upon the tenantry, which, coming on the back of reduced prices, ground them to the dust. Then came applications without end for a reduction of rents; then were heard, for the first time, complaints of the oppressive nature of tithes: corn-laws were clamoured for and obtained, and agricultural distress became a standing topic of conversation in all companies. But it did so happen that in the midst of all his complaints and petitions, the farmer continued

implements of trade, and he received an advance to almost any amount. To be sure, such advances were always made in the notes of the house which granted the accommodation; but as landlord, parson, tax-gatherer, wine-merchant, and in short all the members of the community to whom payments were due, received these notes without scruple, they were just as useful to the needy tenant as if they had been so many guineas. Thus, while there was actual bankruptcy in every quarter, a system of artificial credit was kept up; and business went on, no one knew how, though all at the year's end pronounced themselves losers.

The state of the labourer during this interval, though certainly not what it had been eight or ten years previously, was far from pitiable. Many more were employed on the land than the land actually required,—at least so said the occupier; though there were lookers-on who very much doubted the fact. They were not, indeed, kept constantly at work under one master, as had been the case formerly; neither did they receive all their wages from the gentleman whose fields they tilled. If their wages were still good, varying from twelve shillings and three-pence to half-a-crown a day,

from their landlords' fears, which they had failed to obtain from their compassion. I need not add, that under the working of such a system, the moral and religious feelings of Waltham rapidly declined. But as I shall not be required, at least for the present, to describe the issue of the experiment, I here close my digression, not without a secret consciousness that it has already swelled to a length which the nature of my history scarcely warrants.

CHAPTER XIII.

LODGINGS TO LET.

It is not to be imagined that the friends of order, of religion, and of morals, were either blind to these mischievous proceedings, or backward in applying to the malady such remedies as their best judgment could suggest. The increasing depravity of the lower orders being attributed to ignorance, the most praiseworthy exertions were made to remove it. National schools sprang up in every parish. The children of the poor were not only received into these seminaries on application ;—educated free of all expense to their parents, and loaded with gifts in the shape of prizes ; but the clergyman, the clergyman's wife, the squire, the Lady Bountiful, with I know not how many other benevolent persons besides, went about from cottage to cottage, imploring the poor to send their children to school. As such applications

were generally accompanied by some small but acceptable present, they were for the most part attended to; and crowds of urchins came to learn their letters, sometimes at the hour appointed, sometimes an hour too late, sometimes regularly, sometimes the reverse. But if in these respects they exhibited little heed either to the wishes of their patrons or to their own improvement, in other matters their attention to appearances was very conspicuous. They came, be it late or early,—I mean the girls,—with their hair in papers, and ear-rings in their ears, doubtless as a sort of set-off to the ragged frocks and soiled pinafores in which they were arrayed. Nor could the patrons of the school, in spite of repeated orders to the contrary, overcome this laudable disposition to shine; because the tenure on which they held their pupils together was a singular one. It was no favour done either to parent or child, the admission of the latter into the national school; on the contrary, the answer of the cottager, when petitioned to get her little ones instructed, was in almost all instances the same: “To be sure, ma’am, learning is a fine thing, and I should like to see my Kitty a scholard; only you see I wants her to keep the bab when I

goes out to work. But I have no objection to oblige you, and I will send her to school next Monday."

So to school Kitty came, firmly convinced that the gentlefolks had some purpose of their own to serve in bringing her there; and having learned to repeat by rote what others repeated before her, and scratched for a while on a slate the likeness of nothing "that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth," she fancied that she had done great things, made all the parish her debtors, and rendered herself fit to be the wife of young Mr. Sankey himself.

The first effect of the national school-system at Waltham was to put an extinguisher on the academies of three or four worthy old dames, who, for the last twenty or thirty years, (and they were but the successors of their mothers and grandmothers,) had there enjoyed a monopoly of tuition. Rapidly they broke up; and after mourning over the change of days, and condemning all innovations, they betook themselves, in order to avoid starvation, to the workhouse. One indeed, old Dame Hornbook, clung with commendable pertinacity to her office. Though her pupils fell off from thirty to seven, she still

wielded the rod ; while, in order to eke out the little income arising from their sixpences, she took to manufacturing lollipops and ginger-bread men, which she placed in her window. But Dame Hornbook's was, as might be imagined, a severe struggle to keep the wolf from the door ; nor would she have succeeded at last but for an occurrence as unlooked-for as it proved in its consequences to be momentous.

Among other shifts to which she had recourse, in order to keep soul and body together, Dame Hornbook made arrangements for taking in a lodger ; and as she was remarkably clean and neat in her habits, she had no lack of applications for her apartment. The dame, however, being one who loved regular hours, would neither entrust the key of the door to her inmate, nor undertake to open it after it had once been locked ; and as the generality of the young men in Waltham went upon a totally different principle, though almost all made trial of her as a landlady, no one would continue with her beyond a fortnight at the furthest. The consequence was, that tidy as her apartment was, it might have continued empty, and she herself been driven to fol-

fancy him and he fancies me, he shall have the chamber, and I'll undertake to do for him."

The landlord withdrew, but returned in a few minutes, bringing the stranger along with him. The latter, though a young man, — perhaps under thirty, — was deeply bronzed, as if he had dwelt long in a tropical climate. His hair was black and glossy; he wore a pair of black moustaches; there was a considerable beard under the chin; yet the expression of his countenance was good, and, when he smiled, peculiarly attractive. In height he was about the middle size, well made, spare and muscular; his mien was that of a sea-faring person, and his dress the ordinary costume of the day; so that from it nothing indicative of his position in life could be gathered. Dame Hornbook pulled down her spectacles from her brow, and settling them over her eyes, examined every line in his face with great attention; and having, as it seemed, received a favourable impression, desired to be informed of his will. It was soon explained. He had some reasons of his own for wishing to reside in Waltham a short while, and particularly disliked the bustle of a public-house; and therefore, if she would consent to take him in, he would be glad to

was manifest, however, first, that he was a total stranger to the *locale*, and next, that he was remarkably civil; for he stopped more than one individual that he might inquire the names of the houses and hamlets that lay round the village; and having persuaded the sexton to carry him to the top of the church-tower, gave him a shilling to drink, as the reward of his good-nature. Still the question ran, who could he be? Was he a government spy? for such things were then supposed to be abroad; or was he one of Orator Hunt's agents, and come to stir up the people of Kent to rebellion? Long and eagerly were these questions discussed that night by the village politicians both in the Black Dog and the Blue Bear, insomuch that the Kent Mercury itself, though more than usually crammed with anecdotes of griping parsons, barbarous landlords, and the tyrant Castlereagh, scarcely commanded one willing auditor.

While the good people of Waltham were thus wearying themselves to discover whence Mr. Tomkins could have come, and what his business might be, Mr. Tomkins himself was seated by the side of Dame Hornbook's fire, deeply engaged with her in earnest conver-

sation. He had warned her that he should not return home till evening; and as it was the beginning of December, and he kept his word faithfully, by five o'clock he and she were *tête-à-tête*. Nor were they without comforts very much to the taste of the old woman. Mr. Tomkins had sent in from the shop tea, sugar, butter, bread, candles, and other matters such as he might be expected to require; and he now, very greatly to the surprise and delight of his aged landlady, committed all to her keeping, and requested her to prepare one meal such as might suffice for both. I said some time ago, that the result of Dame Hornbook's first examination of her lodger's countenance was to impress her with a favourable opinion of him; and I need not add, that this marked predilection for her society, accompanied as it was with the gift of an excellent cup of tea, won her heart altogether.

The tea being made, the fire poked up, and a mould-candle (a rare sight to Dame Hornbook's eyes) casting a cheerful light through the room, the stranger, after putting up the window-shutter, and thrusting the bolt into the staple of the door, took possession of an arm-chair in the corner of the wide chimney, and

fell, as it appeared, into a fit of abstraction. Dame Hornbook's heart, however, being merry, she did not understand how any person could be silent, yet cheerful; so, after filling Mr. Tomkins's cup, she addressed to him one or two questions, such as she believed likely to draw him out. "What did he think of the county?" "Had he ever seen Waltham before?" "Was not the church very fine," and "the monuments in the chancel beautiful." "There was one in particular which she was sure must have attracted his attention. It was to the memory of Sir John de Norfleet, his wife, and sixteen children; all of whom were sculptured in marble, in kneeling positions; the knight, on one side of a cushion, with his eight sons behind him, diminishing in size as they fell off from their father; and the lady opposite, with her eight daughters in similar array as a sort of train." To such questions Mr. Tomkins replied with great readiness and good-humour; and then, to the amazement of the dame, became himself the querist.

"You have asked me, mother, whether I was ever in Waltham before: now I will tell you, though I don't wish other people to know it, that I was; and I am anxious to know the

them. The youngest, him they call Dick, or Richard, is still here, one of the most determined profligates in the parish; for he linked himself with that reprobate Tom Overy, almost as soon as Giles disappeared; and the two never rested till they had run through all that old Muster Solley left, and sent Mrs. Solley and her younger children into the work-house. But you are poorly, sir; what is the matter?"

Mr. Tomkins *was* poorly. He was liable to sudden stitches, and one of them had attacked him then; but he would soon be better. He would drink his warm tea, and that would relieve him. He did so, and his composure returned.

"Was Crackstakes taken from them then?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure it was. How that came about I can't tell; there are many different stories told: but the Solleys moved to Sheerwater soon after the Michaelmas term, and Muster Rigden tacked on their farm to his own. There were many that cried shame on my lord and his steward for dismissing tenants that had so long held under him."

"You said that Giles Solley disappeared.

How did that happen, and what was the cause of it?"

"You are a stranger to me, sir," replied the dame, "and I don't know how far I may speak openly before you; but as I only say what I have been told, it's no concern of mine who hears it. They said that he ran away to escape justice after he had murdered Mary Tapsal."

"What!" exclaimed the stranger, starting up, "Mary Tapsal murdered! In the name of God when did that occur, and where?"

"So you knew Mary Tapsal also, did you? Well! you must be better acquainted with Waltham than you would have even me believe. But, since you know so much already, there can be no harm done if you know more. Mary Tapsal was murdered on the night of Friday the ninth day of March 1813. Her body was found next day among the osiers at the bottom of the meadow, with the throat cut from ear to ear; and as Giles Solley was known to keep company with her, and was seen coming out of the churchyard that very night with his garbeline covered with blood; as he went off, also, before morning, leaving his bloody clothes behind, and has never been heard of since, it is

no wonder if people in general suppose that he destroyed her. But, for my part, I knew Giles Solley well. I taught him to read and write when he was a little boy, and a sweeter child, and more kind-hearted and upright youth, never walked upon shoe-leather ; therefore, if all the world were to swear that he murdered Mary Tapsal I would not believe them, and when the day of judgment comes, we shall see who was right and who was wrong."

The stranger did not interrupt his landlady during this long oration, though it might have been easy to gather, from the working of his countenance, that he paid little attention to it. At its close he made no direct reply, but gave utterance to several incoherent exclamations.

"Great God ! then he murdered her after all ! In the month of March 1813 ! Why, it was the very night ; and it was to kill her that he led her down into the meadow, after he found it impossible to work upon her for other purposes."

"Who killed her, and who led her into the meadow ?"

"Who !" cried Mr. Tomkins, manifestly unconscious either that a question had been put

or that he was answering ; “ who but that most accursed of all scoundrels, Tom Overy ? ”

“ You are no stranger here,” shrieked the old woman, springing from her stool as if she had been suddenly restored to youth, and grasping Mr. Tomkins by the arm — “ Who are you ? speak ! Who are you that confirms the suspicion that for years and years I have kept in my breast, though I did not dare to breathe it to any one ? ”

“ Mother,” replied the stranger solemnly, “ can I trust you ? I know that I can. I am not a stranger here. There is not an object in or about the place which is not familiar to me. Your own face, your own room, your own voice, all carry me back to the day of my infancy. Mother, I am Giles Solley.”

CHAPTER XIV.

"Here awa', there awa', ha'ud awa' hame!"

I NEED not detail either the astonishment of Dame Hornbook, or the particulars of the conversation which ensued on this disclosure. Enough is done when I state, that Giles described at length the scene to which he had been witness in the churchyard; his own horror, the bursting of the blood-vessel in his nose, his hasty flight home, and the agony which he endured when alone in his chamber. "Never till that hour, mother," continued he, "was I aware how deeply I loved her. And to find that my devotion was misplaced; that she was not only heartless but depraved; to be made aware thus suddenly of the nature of the precipice on the very brink of which I had stood — mother, my brain would not stand it: I threw off my bloody gaberdine, put on a jacket, let myself quietly out of the front door,

and ran, I knew not whither. The dawn of day found me on the beach, with a man-of-war's boat hauled on shore; and the crew, watching, as I afterwards learned, for smugglers, sitting round it. I was mad. I did not know what I was about. I offered to accompany them on board of ship; and before self-possession returned, I was on my way to the coast of Africa.

“Repenting, when it was too late, of the precipitation with which I had acted, I endeavoured to make my case known to the captain; but I received for answer, that the king was in want of seamen, and that I ought to have thought of all that before I volunteered. My next most anxious wish was to find an opportunity of communicating with my friends at home, whose anxiety on my account would be, I did not doubt, extreme. I little thought that in flying from my own misery I had involved them and myself in irretrievable disgrace. Well, no vessel of any kind bound for England met us in all our passage, and we reached the African coast without any misfortune; but there a terrible storm overtook us, and the ship being cast away upon a rocky shore, every soul, for aught I know to the con-

trary, perished, except myself. I was carried to the land upon a hencoop to which I clung, and cast up, more dead than alive, over a frightful precipice, where one of the natives found me in a state of complete exhaustion, and with great humanity removed me to his house. The man was a Mohammedan, and an officer of rank in the service of the prince; and ascertaining that I was an Englishman, behaved very kindly to me. In fact, he introduced me to the sovereign; and as all Englishmen were supposed at that court to be skilful both in medicine and the art of war, I found myself called upon, first, to prescribe for the favourite wife of the king, and then to undertake the training of a corps of infantry.

“ If I had been removed all at once from Crackstake to Babooland, you may well believe that I should have made a sorry figure either as a doctor or a general. As it was, the notice which I had taken of the drilling of the marines sufficed to give me some confidence in drilling the negroes; while, as good luck would have it, I had been frequently employed in the cock-pit, and therefore could venture to bleed, and to administer a dose of common physic. The belief in my skill was, happily for me,

confirmed by the recovery of the black queen ; and my valour and conduct as an officer soon became conspicuous. The Baboos were at war with a neighbouring tribe, the Shushoos, from whom they had sustained repeated defeats. But some muskets having been saved out of the wreck of our vessel, and the palace of King Cooboo containing a cask of damaged powder, I armed a few men as Europeans are armed, and having accustomed them to the report of their own weapons, led them forth to fight, in perfect confidence of victory. Nor was I disappointed. At the first discharge, though not more than seven of the nineteen muskets went off, the whole army of Shushoos took to flight ; and we were enabled soon afterwards to dictate a peace in the enemy's capital.

“ It would little interest you, good mother, if I were to describe the sort of life which I led among these savage people during four tedious years. Kind to me they were, as kind as men could be ; for the king offered me the choice of all his wives.”

“ And I hope you did not take her,” interrupted Dame Hornbook.

“ No, no, mother, nothing of the sort. I was too anxious to return home, too uneasy

about my mother and her little ones, to think of forming a connexion elsewhere. But I did accept the gold and jewels with which he loaded me; and watched eagerly for an opportunity of withdrawing myself from his country. But there was little traffic between Baboo and any European settlement; so that month after month, and year after year, stole on, and still I was miserable. At last, however, an American cruiser came into the river to water, with which, in spite of the jealousy of the Baboos, I contrived to open a communication. The result was, that though obliged to sacrifice the larger portion of my riches, I was enabled to convey on board enough to set me up in business, and keep me with frugality and industry the rest of my days; and that, taking my passage in the officers' cabin, I arrived safely in London ten days ago. And in what state do I find my family and my own reputation!"

Having thus described his past adventures, Giles proceeded to consult with his landlady how it would be advisable to proceed, in order not merely to vindicate his own good name from reproach, but to bring the real murderer to justice. With this view, he questioned her closely as to all that had come out on the in-

quest ; and being more and more satisfied that, provided one or two links could be taken up, the proof of Overy's guilt would be perfect, he set himself anxiously to search for them.

"What had become of the woman who lived as housemaid in Mr. Jacobson's family at the period when Mary Tapsal was murdered?"

"She was married and settled in a neighbouring parish, and was the mother of two children."

"Was the cobbler still alive whose hammer had been used on that awful occasion?"

"He was, and continued to work where he used to do ; nay, and still more, he kept the hammer hung up in his shop in the very same state it was in when the coroner handled it, either because he expected some day or another to produce it in a court of justice, or because he loved to entertain his customers and visitors with the tradition attaching to it."

Giles put his hand before his eyes, and thought deeply some time. "There was a boy that used to work at Farrier's forge, by name Jem Spark ; he was an apprentice to Farrier, and a particularly intelligent lad ——?"

"He is still in the forge. He is now Farrier's journeyman and right-hand man."

“And Overy himself, — has any trace been had of him?”

Dame Hornbook was not so sure of that. He had never been in Waltham, certainly since the breaking up of his partnership with Dick; but whether anybody knew aught about him, was more than she could tell.

Giles had nothing more to ask; and interesting as the conversation was, the good dame was beginning to exhibit symptoms of weariness: he therefore bound her, under a solemn promise, not to reveal to a human being the secret with which he had entrusted her; and having satisfied himself that his mother, though an inmate of the workhouse, was still in health, he retired to his chamber. It was not to be expected that he should sleep very soundly.

Giles Solley was an early riser; and the necessity under which he had been thrown of depending throughout some years of his life on his own resources, had given him a wonderful command both of his feelings and his manner. When he met Dame Hornbook next morning, therefore, there were no traces in his countenance of anxiety or excitement; indeed the dame almost doubted whether she had not dreamed of Giles Solley's return, and was now awakened to a

ge of real events by finding that a was her lodger. Just before he went ever, Giles saluted her so affectionately visions of the previous night came back orce; and she wished him God-speed, his business might be, with the fer-one who prayed from the heart: nor prayer uttered in vain.

were two objects before Giles Solley, which he was desirous to accomplish with delay as possible, though one of them t be entered upon till the other should n in some sort effected. He desired, umed name, to make affidavit before a te, accusing Tom Overy of the crime of and then to hunt through every lane y in London, whither he understood ruffian was gone, till he should find o-day he calculated that the magis-ht be seen, and his warrant obtained; he morrow he would proceed by the h to town. He made, therefore, for , where a place might be secured; and with the host into a conversation out of e hoped to collect who was, or at least considered to be, the most intelligent in the neighbourhood. Publicans are

generally excellent judges of the qualifications of the magistrates round them. So Giles was quite satisfied when assured, "that Colonel Hamilton, him as had lately taken Birch Grove, was by far the ablest justice on the bench ; because, as how, he did not bother his head about trifles, though no man could be more in earnest when a serious case came before him." To him Giles resolved to apply ; and he was passing the tap-room door for that purpose, when a voice, of which the tones were familiar to him, struck upon his ear.

" Well, well," the speaker said, " our turn will come next. They may hang the poor fellows if they please ; but take my word for it, mates, that this sort of thing won't last for ever. There are more nor one Thistlewood in the world, and the bloody Castlereagh will some day know it."

Giles looked in ; and there, in the corner of a box, with his face full towards him, sat Tom Overy. He was a good deal changed since Giles last saw him ; for time, and, far more, dissipation, had scored and bloated his countenance ; and, besides that his dress was mean and squalid, he looked worn down with long travel. Three or four of his old acquaintances,

them on some great event which had
en. Giles did not stop to ascertain
event might be ; but perceiving that
adle and a stick lay on the table be-
; he addressed himself in a whisper
lord.

ou know that man in the corner of
nder ?”

lord looked in. “ To be sure I
e ; “ that ’s Tom Overy, a d—nation
he used to be when he lived here ;
aven’t seen anything of him these

And I ’m blowed if he don’t look

!” again whispered Giles, “ as you
er for it in a court of justice, don’t
man to go till you hear from me again.
has a great account to settle ; and if
t him to escape, your life will go for

"I will bear you blameless," answered Giles: "and now, which is the nearest way to Colonel Hamilton's?"

"Go to the end of the street, sir, across the bridge, and then take the path to your left. But here, as good luck would have it, comes the colonel himself; that's him upon horse-back."

Giles advanced to meet the gentleman, and, raising his hat, received a polite salutation in return. "May I crave a few words with you, sir, on public business of the greatest importance? And may I, moreover, entreat the favour of you to detain a man who is now sitting in the tap-room of the Lion, and whom I am prepared to convict of a heinous capital offence?"

"What!" exclaimed the colonel, "one of the Cato-street gang? Has the rascal made his way this length already? Come and show me your man."

They moved towards the Lion, but were yet a few paces from it, when Overy appeared at the door in angry colloquy with the host.

"That is he, sir," cried Giles; "make him your prisoner."

The colonel rode up, and desired Overy, in the king's name, to surrender.

"What am I to surrender for?" exclaimed Tom, thrusting his hand into his bosom; "show me your authority to detain a traveller on his journey, or I won't submit to you or to any man."

The colonel sprang from his horse, and Giles rushed forward; for Overy had already cast himself loose from the landlord, and made as if he would take his chance of escape by flight. Giles was the first to close with him; on which he pulled a pistol from beneath his waistcoat and presented it: but before he could pull the trigger, Giles dashed the muzzle upwards, and it exploded without doing the slightest injury to any one. There was no time to draw another, for he had to deal with one far more active as well as vigorous than himself; and he was prostrate upon his back, with Giles kneeling on his chest, before either the colonel or the landlord could interfere. Immediately a farther search took place, and a second pistol was found charged to the muzzle. And now being completely harmless, he was led, Giles guarding him on one side and the

landlord on the other, into the parlour of the Lion.

"What is it you want?" demanded the unhappy man. "I never struck a blow. I offered no resistance. I was drawn into it, I allow; but when the soldiers came I put out the lights and fled, and I can't tell who stabbed the policeman."

"Well, sir," replied the colonel, "we shall hear all that you have to say by-and-by; and I warn you to be careful lest you commit yourself. If, indeed, you be willing to make a confession, I will receive it; but I tell you, before you utter a syllable, that it will avail you nothing. And now, sir," continued he, turning to Giles, "what may the information be which you have to communicate?"

"I have nothing whatever to say, sir," replied Giles, "as to the grave offence in which the prisoner has implicated himself. Mine is a charge of a different nature. I accuse him of having murdered, on the night of the ninth of March 1814, an unfortunate girl in this parish, called Mary Tapsal."

Giles no sooner pronounced his charge, than the whole frame of the prisoner shook as with an ague fit: he reeled, staggered, and

would have fallen, had not the landlord supported him; yet he recovered his self-possession almost immediately, and peremptorily denied the charge.

"Please your worship, this man, of whom I know nothing, accuses me of a crime which is well known to have been committed by one Giles Solley, a fellow who kept the young woman company, and fled immediately after he had killed her. Let him state his grounds for the charge, and I undertake very easily to rebut them."

"First of all," said Giles, "may I request your worship to summon hither Margaret Oldfield, the wife of William Oldfield of the parish of Peckham, who formerly lived as housemaid in the family of the Rev. Mr. Jacobson? I shall also want the evidence of James Spark, foreman to Mr. Farrier, the blacksmith."

When the prisoner heard the names of these witnesses, his confidence appeared again to be shaken: yet he made a vigorous effort; and by the time the woman arrived, which was not till the expiration of nearly half an hour, he was perfectly composed. Meanwhile the cobbler, having heard of what was in progress, did not

wait to be sent for, but made his appearance in the justice-room, wielding the hammer with which the first blow was supposed to have been struck. Nor was Mr. Jacobson long after him, nor Mr. Sankey, nor Mr. Rigden, nor any others of the parties who had formerly given evidence on the inquest; while the coroner himself being summoned, it was resolved, in case other clues should fail, to have recourse to the book in which he had entered the particulars of the case. Some time was unavoidably occupied in making these arrangements, but they were completed at last; and the colonel, with paper and pens before him, sat down to carry through what all present felt to be a most interesting and important investigation.

The first evidence examined was, of course, the accuser, who gave his name John Tomkins. He began by stating that he was in the churchyard of Waltham during the evening libelled; and being hidden behind a buttress, overheard a conversation between Thomas Overy and the deceased young woman. He described it almost word for word as it has been given here, so deep and so terrible had been the impression made on his memory. While this was doing,

Overy repeatedly gasped for breath. At length he interrupted the speaker by exclaiming—

“That ’s false, that ’s false! I did not persuade her to swear the child to another. I did not urge her to marry Giles Solley.”

“So, then,” observed the colonel, “you had a conversation with the ill-fated woman on the evening of her death? No wonder that you were so well able to guide the seekers to the spot where the body lay.”

The prisoner groaned deeply; while Mrs. Oldfield, now freed from all apprehensions of getting herself into trouble, disclosed, what it appeared she had known all along, that Mary Tapsal went abroad on the night of the murder for the express purpose of meeting Tom Overy. Then followed the evidence of Jem Spark, who proved that Giles Solley had, in his presence, returned the hammer to Tom Overy six days previous to the girl’s death. And last of all came the testimony of Mr. Sankey, Mr. Rigden, and others, who all swore to the false statements which he had made at the inquest, respecting Solley’s dress, and the hour at which he passed him.

“And now,” observed the colonel, “before I

call upon this wretched man to plead, permit me to inquire, Mr. Tomkins, by what extraordinary means you have been enabled to trace this foul deed to the real perpetrator, and to clear the memory of an innocent man from undeserved obloquy?"

Giles answered without a moment's hesitation, "Sir, I am not John Tomkins; I am Giles Solley himself."

A shout burst from every lip except that of Overy, which quivered, expanded, and then closed again firmly. His eye lost its fire; his voice was hoarse and husky, while he said, "It's no use denying it. I did the deed, and I must suffer for it."

The remainder of this history may be given in few words. Tom Overy being tried at Maidstone, was condemned to be executed, and his body given for dissection. During the interval between the passing of that sentence and his well-merited death, he made a disclosure of all the crimes that he had perpetrated; among which was included, not only his abuse of Dick Solley's easy temper, but a base act of treachery which he had played off on Giles. It appeared that, allured by the prospect of a reward, he had communicated to Mr. Sankey the

sort of duty which he was called upon to perform as Giles's amanuensis; taking care, of course, to exaggerate Giles's delinquencies, and to accuse him of purposes which he never meditated. The result was the concoction of a false letter, under Mr. Sankey's inspection, which was put into the post-office instead of the true one; and eventually the harsh refusal made to the widow's request of keeping on the farm. With the share which he had in the Cato-street conspiracy, I have here no concern. He avowed it, and therefore it may be believed; but as no public notice was ever taken of the matter, it does not stand in record against him. Nor, to say the truth, did he stand in need of any accession to his crimes, whose hands were red with the blood of the woman whom he had seduced, and who made use of the unsuspecting nature of his friend, to lead him into vice and ruin.

With respect to Giles himself, no sooner was his case stated to Lord Brambling, than he received ample satisfaction. Large farms not being now the profitable things that they had been during the war, Mr. Rigden was easily induced to sever Crackstakes from Gorse Hall; and some sixty acres being added to the former,

Giles entered once more into possession. I need not add, that his mother, with her two young children, went with him ; and that the order of domestic life became among them again what it used to be in the days of the old man. But no entreaties on his mother's part, nor any working of compassion in his own breast, could prevail upon Giles to treat Dick as a brother. " Had he been guilty of mere extravagance and folly, I could have looked over it," said he ; " but to treat his widowed mother so ! No, no ! Dick must now be to me as a stranger." And Giles kept his word ; for, except that he occasionally employed him, and paid him for his work, he took of Dick no notice.



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THE VILLAGE ORACLE.

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THE VILLAGE ORACLE.

CHAPTER I.

BAD TIMES.

BETWEEN the date of the last of the occurrences described in the foregoing history, and of those which are to form the subject of the following narrative, an interval of very twelve years is supposed to have intervened. It was a period, as all must feel who are old enough to recollect it, not merely remarkable for excitement in reference to scenes immediately in progress, but pregnant with great consequences for the future. The expectations which had been formed relative to the effects of peace had all to have failed them. Poverty, universal poverty, had followed in its train; for it was everywhere languished, manufac-

tures everywhere ceased, and agriculture itself went rapidly to decay. It is true that many causes contributed to bring about these effects, of which little heed was taken at the moment. The most vigilant government in the world, for example, could not have secured to its own subjects a monopoly of the carrying trade at a time when the seas were open to the ships of all nations. In like manner it was impossible to force British-manufactured goods into markets where people were unwilling to receive them, while the cessation of that prodigious demand for provisions, which a war waged over the whole surface of the globe had occasioned, could not but produce a great fall in the prices of agricultural commodities. Neither the merchant, nor the manufacturer, nor the farmer, however, thought of these things, or strove to adapt his habits and his ideas to the altered state of his circumstances. On the contrary, each and all continued to live and to speculate as they had been accustomed to do under a totally different state of affairs, and when poverty pinched, or ruin overtook them, they complained only of the ignorance of those to whom they had committed the le-

gislative trust, and the wanton cruelty of their rulers.

Wherever the social system rests on a foundation so artificial as this, the seeds of discontent, of sedition, and of every other offence against the public weal, must be thickly sown; and to foster and bring these to maturity, a very slender share of industry and talent are required. Mankind are always ready to believe those who tell them that their sufferings, when they do suffer, are brought about by the faults of others; nor are there wanting, during times of distress, zealous apostles of that doctrine. Among the manufacturing population, for example, a cry was soon heard, that their privations were owing entirely to the injustice of the corn-laws; the decaying corn-grower, on the other hand, clamoured for a higher protecting duty, and for increased facilities of purchasing his excisable necessities at a cheap rate. Meanwhile the monied interests, as fundholders and dealers in stock, declared that there never could be anything like security in the market till the issues of paper were materially curtailed. How could any government proceed under such circumstances? Rulers are but men after all,

subject to the same infirmities and swayed by the same motives as other men, of whom it is as absurd as it is iniquitous to expect more than that they will act for the best; and if they cannot succeed in allaying the winds and waves with a word, are they to be reproached for the absence of power to work miracles? In the present instance, the British government did its best to meet the wishes and satisfy the wants of the people. Seeing that it was no longer possible to command a monopoly of the commerce of the world, what has been called the reciprocity system was adopted. Free trade became the fashion of the hour, and the principle of free trade was sanctioned by act of parliament. In the same spirit the corn-laws underwent such revisions as brought the duty on imported grain down from what had amounted almost to a virtual prohibition, and fixed it at a scale that varied in proportion both to the demand and the supply. Last of all, an edict went forth which, prohibiting the issue of one-pound notes, struck at the root of all the country bankers' profits, and gold and silver became again the current coin of the realm. There was not one of these arrangements which failed at the moment to receive the approbation of

the sages, though the benefits anticipated from them did not flow either so directly or so rapidly as could have been wished. How may the fact be accounted for?

As I am not writing a history of the transactions of the last twenty years, and have nothing to do in this place with the condition of the manufacturing population, I leave to some other and abler chronicler the task of making out for them what case he can. In reference to the agriculturists also, it is perhaps more easy to follow the progress of events as they developed themselves, than to trace back effects to their true causes. There are, however, certain matters on record, of which the proofs lie so completely upon the surface, that I am not afraid of committing any error by referring to them. In the first place, there needs no argument to show, that habits acquired in youth and in the vigour of early manhood are not easily abandoned in maturity. Bad as the times were from 1818 to 1829, they did not wholly eradicate the caste of fox-hunting, champagne-drinking, and phaeton-driving tenants. With respect again to the ladies, their style of dress, their habits in the domestic circle, and their general demeanour at home and abroad,

were certainly not of a nature to induce a viction in the breast of the looker-on that were the wives or daughters of poor men. be sure, silks, laces, gloves, ribbons, &c. all considerably cheaper in 1828 than they been in 1813, and so far lay more within reach of those who possessed the means of purchasing: but as the true value of an article is to be estimated by the consumer according to his own ability to pay for it, not according to the price which it fetches in the market, so the husband and father of a bevy of well-dressed persons, haranguing in his town-built carriage, was not very likely to excite commiseration when he spoke of the derangement of his affairs, and attributed the whole blame to the government of his country.

It was not, however, of the government alone that the farmer now complained. If the taxes were said to be ruinously high, tithes ground him to the dust, and the little profits that remained after these demands were set aside had disappeared altogether in the vortex of the high rates. Now it might or it might not be true that landlords still required for their farms more than the farms were worth; but if it were true, the farmers had themselves alone

or it. The competition for land was as great as it had ever been. Was estate in the market? If offered for there were dozens eager to purchase; if to hire were scores ready to hire. How was it possible for the landlords to be that they did exact more than the tenants on a condition to pay? And as to tithes, were precisely what they had ever been, a remarkable exception, that, generally speaking, the clergy entered into compositions, which of course the farmers assented, because they were advantageous; whereas lay-impropriators almost always took their tithe in kind. Yet it was not of the proceedings of the impropriator that complaints were ever made. The clergy were traduced as oppressors, because they dealt more leniently with their tenants than they might have done; and with respect to the poor-rates, how could these hanging round the agriculturist's neck like a mill-stone, under such circumstances as we are now living?

During the good times of the war, when the demand for labour was great, working men received as wages half-a-crown a day. At seasons of extraordinary pressure, such as harvest,

hay, and the like, they might earn three, and sometimes four shillings. At that period wheat sold for ninety or one hundred shillings a quarter. All the other necessities of life, including sugar, tea, fuel, clothing, were in the same proportion; yet the working people thrived and were contented. The poor-rates were not then heavy; though, when a family did become chargeable, it was very liberally dealt with, for no one grudged the comforts to which its members had been accustomed, and which it cost the community a mere trifle to supply. The return of peace reversed this order of things. There was a greater demand for employment than could be met; the prices of all consumable articles fell; yet neither the wages of the workman, nor the amount of relief granted to the pauper, kept pace with them. During the latter part of the war a wretched custom had crept in of granting to all large families a sort of annuity out of the poor-rates. The practice was not only continued, but rendered more general, after the peace. No matter whether the man was in steady employment or the reverse, his wife received from the committee an allowance every week for every child of which she was the mother, above some esta-

blished number; while those who could not find, or did not choose to find, employment anywhere, derived all their subsistence from the parish. Nor did the evil end here. The labourers constantly appealing from the vestry to the bench of magistrates, and the bench somewhat incautiously giving orders for employment or relief, there sprang up a habit of combining the two into one, till at last a large proportion of the work on each farm was paid for out of the sums collected from the parishioners at large under the authority of a poor-rate. No wonder that the tenant complained of the amount of a burthen which his own proceedings tended to increase from day to day; or that the result of returns demanded by the House of Commons was to show that, if things went on a few years longer as they had done in times past, the whole profits of the land would be required to maintain the labourers alone.

When it came to this, a new set of persons began to take an interest in the management of parochial affairs. There were in all parishes a greater or less number of families who did not derive their support, at least directly, from the land, and who were therefore entitled to

call in question the justice of a policy which required them to pay any portion of the wages of the farm-servants. The little shopkeeper, indeed, was not of that number, for he knew well, that if his poor-rates were somewhat too heavy, he received back again in the custom of the well-paid pauper much more than his share of that pauper's pay; but the retired tradesman, the apothecary, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the clergyman—every individual, in short, not actually benefited by the system, complained. There was no possibility of putting down such complaints by argument, and the illegality of paying any portion of the men's wages out of the rate was shown. Of course this drove the farmer to the adoption of a new system. He began to discover that it was out of all reason to continue the same payments to his men that he had been in the habit of making when corn was at the highest. Wages were accordingly reduced; and though the people grumbled, they were either convinced that the proceeding was a fair one, or, knowing that they could not help themselves, they submitted. So far the tenant did no more than the circumstances of the case warranted; but having once tasted the sweets of reduction, he fancied that he could

not obtain too much of it, and he proceeded farther with his devices.

Wherever there was courage enough to attempt it, and the magistrates gave their support, the vestries cut off the whole or a portion of the extra allowances which had hitherto been granted to large families. They still, indeed, assisted such families by giving them something towards the payment of their rent and the purchase of clothing, and encouraged thereby the speculators in cottages to keep up the prices, while they totally discountenanced the formation of habits of economy among the people. But with the view of counterbalancing the change thus created, they dealt, as they conceived, very wisely with single men. No matter what a man's character might be, he could not, if he had but himself to keep, obtain employment on almost any terms. No ; the large families must be maintained, and it was desirable to get some return for what they cost : the unmarried man, therefore, if he desired to get a job at all, must bribe the farmer to give it, by undertaking to work for half the ordinary wages. I need not say that the direct consequences of such a system were universal discontent, and a rapid increase of improvident

marriages. For two men worked side by side in the same field ; the one, who was young, healthy, robust, and willing, did twice as much as his lazy and feeble neighbour, for which he was gratified at the week's end by perceiving that while he got his six or seven shillings, the other obtained twelve or fourteen. It was to no purpose that the employer reminded him that the bad workman was paid so much more than he in justice to his family ; " Very well," was the answer, " I will try to get a family too ;" and till that object *was* attained the words of complaint were never out of the young man's mouth.

All this while the great object of the farmer was to wring from his landlord a reduction of rents, from the parson a reduction of tithes, and from the government a reduction of taxes. Trusting, moreover, to succeed as much through the fears as the good feeling of these several parties, he was in too many instances prompt to encourage the circulation of newspapers which, besides launching out in abuse of the established institutions of the country, filled their columns with atrocious libels upon the higher orders. A reform in parliament likewise, which used to be the panacea among the manu-

facturers, alone, began to be looked for in the agricultural districts also as the remedy for all evils; and publications which advocated that were greedily devoured, even when there accompanied the editor's reasoning hints utterly subversive of all honesty between man and man. For a while the farmer flattered himself that all this would answer his purpose. He was happy in the belief that he was himself represented as one of the sufferers from the cruelty of those above him; and that he and his allies of the press would succeed in convincing the pauper that with him neither landlord nor parson had any community of feeling. But this could not last for ever. The labourers *felt* the load which immediately bore upon them, while they were only *told* of those still more heavy loads which caused the pressure; and the miscreants who had hitherto directed their fury against the highest classes exclusively soon perceived how the land lay, and took advantage of it. For men who write for the passions, not for the reason and moral sense, of the poor, care not who may be the victims, so that they succeed in stirring up strife. It was no longer on the squire or the parson only that abuse was heaped: the cruelties perpetrated at vestries,

the injustice of denying relief to an applicant, no matter how undeserving,—the barbarity and inhumanity of reducing the industrious classes to a universal pauperism,—these were now the favourite topics on which to declaim, till minds already exasperated by real or imaginary wrongs lost their balance entirely. There must be some other cause than the exactions of landlords and parsons for the sufferings of the poor. There was such a cause. When so many men were out of employ, why should the farmer use machinery in any case? and why, if the land could not pay for cultivation, keep it in the hands of a few, when there were multitudes ready to take and make a profit of it? Such was the state of public feeling at Waltham when this history opens: of the consequence to which it led, the history itself gives a disclosure.

CHAPTER II.

A POOR MAN'S FRIEND.

It was on a beautiful morning towards the end of July, when the corn had attained to its full growth, and the dingy green of the blade was in many places beginning to merge into yellow, that there appeared over the door of a shop in Waltham, which for some time had stood vacant, the following announcement, inscribed in bright gilt letters: "London House Establishment—Ready-money prices—Twenty per cent. under prime cost. James Marshall, licensed dealer in groceries, from Messrs. Peel and Pepperpod, Great Cumberland-street, Borough." The trap had been arranged and baited for the simple folks of Waltham with consummate skill. For some days previously they were indeed aware that the shop in question had found a tenant; for the carpenter

had been employed to put up some shelves; and sundry chests and boxes, addressed to Mr. J. Marshall, had arrived from London by the van, though they were still in the keeping of the landlord of the Lion. But of the kind of business which the new tenant proposed to carry on, no one knew anything; neither was it certain that the packages in question were designed for him. When, therefore, the light of a new day displayed to their admiring gaze a sign so attractive as that of which I have transcribed the legend, the effect produced was in every respect such as Mr. Marshall could have wished. Men proceeding to their labour in the fields stopped and read, and then went back to inform their wives. The wives, so soon as their children were packed off to school, sallied forth to reconnoitre; and though it was yet but the middle of the week, Marshall's shop became, within the space of one day, a perfect thoroughfare. I do not know whether the till received that day any large accession of silver and copper coin; but that Mr. Marshall himself had succeeded in making a very favourable impression on the minds of the ladies, the return of Saturday night made manifest.

The individual who had thus contrived to establish by a sort of *coup-de-main* the most thriving business in Waltham, was about three-and-thirty years of age, or perhaps a year or two less. His external appearance was very different from that of village traders in general. A complexion differing little in hue from that of an Italian, yet singularly clear and healthy; hair and whiskers black as the raven's wing; an aquiline nose; teeth white and strong; a mouth full of expression, of which it was not always an easy matter to read the meaning;—these, with a figure little if at all surpassing the middle stature, but moulded upon nature's most accurate model, made up altogether such a personage as one does not see every day standing behind a counter either in town or country. Nor was it only in his outward appearance that he differed widely from those of his class in general—his manners were attractive in a remarkable degree.

Gentle, obliging, kind, taking no account of personal trouble, and evidently disposed to think well of all with whom he conversed, Mr. Marshall not only won golden opinions from such as frequented his shop, but gradually obtained over them a sort of influence for

which they found it difficult to account. The fact however was, that Mr. Marshall possessed not only a more than common stock of knowledge, but far more than a common stock of philanthropy. He was aware of the sort of goods of which poor men's families stood most in need; and though at a clear loss to himself, would often dissuade the wife from laying out her money to a disadvantage. But this was not all: he was a patient — nay, a sympathising listener to every tale of distress. His own means were not extensive, to be sure; yet he had always a trifling article to bestow on such as needed it. An extra ounce of tea, or the remnant of a cask of butter, was often thrown in where it seemed peculiarly acceptable; and then all his weights and measures were capital. No wonder that Mr. Marshall should have become a mighty favourite with such as loved to hear themselves talk, and whose favourite topic was of course their own sufferings, attributable, not to any negligence or mismanagement at home, but to the barbarity of employers and parish officers.

The result of all this was, that long before a sickle had been put into the harvest, Marshall was decidedly at the head of the grocery

concern, not only in Waltham, but in the neighbouring parishes. The labouring people universally gave him their custom; and the excellent report which they conveyed to the market-gardeners induced many of them to support him also; for he was an accommodating as well as a liberal trader. In spite of the intimation conveyed by his sign, that he purposed to deal for ready money only, his heart proved a great deal too tender to be guided by motives of prudence alone. First one, and then another needy family, got into his debt. To be sure they belonged, one and all, to a class which could not be expected to keep above the world; they were parties receiving parochial relief, not one of whom could command more than fifteen shillings weekly, while a large majority could not muster thirteen. And then when the single men came to him, stating fairly at the outset that they never earned more than six shillings, how could a man of his temper press for ready money, when the consequence of his doing so would have been, that the poor fellows must go without their beer, and of course be deprived of the instruction which was communicated to them by the readers in the Anchor tap.

Now Mr. Marshall was one of those who held in unmitigated abhorrence the idea of stinting the poor man in his innocent enjoyments. He was, moreover, a decided friend to the diffusion of knowledge; and held it to be a violation of the first law of nature, that by the rich the pleasures of life should be engrossed, while the poor had all the labour. And as to the arguments of such as spoke of the justice and the necessity among all classes of cutting men's coats according to their cloth, that he regarded as one of the old-fashioned maxims of which time had exposed the sophistry. The pauper might depend for existence itself on the bounty of others, while the landed proprietor owned a large tract of country. Still, the pauper had just as good a right to drink his beer and read his newspaper, as the landlord to swill his claret and study geology.

I need not add, that Mr. Marshall's reasoning was pronounced unanswerable by the frequenters of his shop; and as he followed it up by permitting his customers to contract debts rather than squeeze from them the money which was required at the public-house, he never wanted either listeners at home or trumpeters to sound his praises abroad.

Over two grades in the society of Waltham r. Marshall thus established an influence: efforts to insinuate himself into the good graces of a third were not so immediately successful. By the farmers in general he was regarded with distrust. It is true that his political principles were found upon inquiry to agree pretty nearly with those of what is called the Blue party. He was a strenuous advocate of parliamentary reform; he hated the very name of the pension list, and denounced all taxation as iniquitous and oppressive. The parsons were in his eyes worthy of all possible detestation; and as to the national debt, he contended that there was but one way of dealing with it. What right had our ancestors to contract engagements, and then leave us to settle them? He was friendly to Cobbett's scheme; the sponge—the sponge should put all to rights; and then, in order to prevent the possible accumulation of new embarrassments, a new order of things ought to be instituted. In the first place, those who conducted the affairs of government ought to be exempt of no pecuniary remuneration: the honor and the patronage were quite sufficient for them. In the next place, persons offering

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the matter?"

"No," answered the man
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put anybody

himself. But what is the summons about? I know you all give a great deal too much rent for your houses, and it is an infamous shame that you should be called upon to pay poor-cess. But your landlord can't summon you here, at least; and as to poor-rates——"

"It's not for poor-cess," interrupted Redman; "it's for tithes. Here's a demand on me for the tithe of my 'tatoe-garden, that never was rated before; I must pay it between this and Tuesday next, or else I'm to be had up afore the magistrates."

"For tithes!" exclaimed Marshall, while his quick eye sparkled with delight. "Oh! that's quite another matter. D—n the parson! never think of paying him; let him do his worst. If he dare to go on with the business, let him look to it. A parson is the best of all oppressors to deal with."

"But we don't pay to the parson. I wish we did. He's a kind-hearted man, and would let us off easy. We pay to Muster Harrison."

"That alters the case," replied Marshall, a little taken aback; "but doesn't Muster Harrison hire the tithes of the archbishop?"

"Oh yes!" answered Redman,—“he's what they call the lessee.”

"Well, well," replied Marshall, "that will do just as well. We can easily give out that the archbishop gets an enormous rent for his tithes, and that the lessee is obliged to grind the poor man to the dust, otherwise he could not pay at all. And then there's the case of the perpetual curate. Hang it, I don't much like saying a kind thing of any parson, but we may use him as a weapon with which to knock down his superior. He's very badly paid, isn't he?"

"They say he is, but I can't tell. I only know he never complains, and seems very comfortable."

"That's a pity; but it won't make any odds in our hands. Let me see the summons."

The summons was shown, conned over, and left in Mr. Marshall's hands. Not long, however, was it the sole document of the kind submitted to his consideration; for Redman no sooner made his neighbours aware of the interest which Mr. Marshall had taken in his affairs, than they also in great numbers flocked over to Waltham. The consequence was, that a large portion of Sunday was spent by him in receiving the visits of his poor customers,

and in listening to their complaints of oppression. From the latter he learned that some misunderstanding having arisen between the tithe-payers and the tithe-receiver in Appleby, a fresh survey of the parish had taken place. This necessarily brought the fact to light, that there were on all the farms multitudes of small holdings—two acres or an acre and a half here and there, attached to the cottages—for which the tenants had hitherto paid tithe in the lump, but for which, on the plea that they themselves made nothing of them, they refused to pay any longer. What was the lessee to do? He selected certain plots of land well stocked with potatoes, by far the most valuable crop that is reared from the land; and not being affected by any nice considerations as to the condition of the actual occupants, he resolved to demand the tithes of them. But the occupants being merely labouring men who had prevailed on their masters to sub-let these gardens, never contemplated the possibility that such a charge could be made, and refusing point blank to enter into any arrangement, had all been summoned to the monthly meeting at Waltham as defaulters. There could not be a case more perfectly to Marshall's

cudgels against Mr. Marshall, and, after sundry inquiries, elicited two admissions; first, that though the cottagers never had paid tithes, the land before it came into their occupation was always titheable; next, that the lessee, on finding that he was no longer to look to their landlords for payment, had served each of them with a proper legal notice to set out his tithes in kind. All therefore that he now sought was a fair compensation for such tithe, seeing that they had neglected to pay attention to the notice served upon them. There was no getting over stubborn facts like these. Mr. Marshall, after a vain attempt to browbeat the parson-magistrate, which ended in an announcement, that if he did not treat the bench with becoming respect he would be ejected, withdrew, and a large majority of those who had put themselves under his protection were sentenced not only to pay to the lessee his dues, but to defray the costs of the prosecution.

CHAPTER III.

A MAN OF AUTHORITY.

THE impression produced upon the society of Waltham and its neighbourhood by the part which he had played in this tithe prosecution was in every respect favourable to Mr. Marshall. The labouring classes, including the small market-gardeners, an order of men who work harder if they do not fare worse than almost any other, looked up to him as their protector against oppression; while the farmers in general, but especially the Blues, spoke of him as a monstrous clever fellow, who must have beaten the whole bench had that cursed parson only kept away. Among these there was one so peculiarly circumstanced, that it will be necessary to give some account of him, more especially as the official situation which he chanced to hold gave him considerable influence in the

parish; and it was a great matter for Mr. Marshall to have that influence exerted in his favour.

Mr. Thomas Amos, at this time overseer of the poor in Waltham, had inherited, when very young, a moiety of the tithes of Appleby; the other moiety being bequeathed to his sister, then a girl, but who had since married the prosecutor in the late actions. For many years, that is to say, throughout the good times of the war, Mr. Amos hired her portion from his sister, and, living in Appleby, collected the whole of the tithes of the parish in kind, and with a rigid hand. Holding the lease moreover on very easy terms, as well with reference to the archbishop as to his relative, he found himself in the enjoyment of a large income, which he spent among cock-fighters, card-players, boxers, and other flash people, with the utmost fairness and liberality. In his personal habits, likewise, he was the very *bien idéal* of a gay, jovial, thriving yeoman of Kent. Nobody throughout the surrounding districts rode such excellent horses, or dressed with greater taste than he; and among the women he was said to be irresistible; for, in addition to a striking exterior and an athletic form, he

could boast of manners which, in his own sphere, were regarded as princely. And his accomplishments were in every respect in agreement with his exterior. Mr. Amos was a dead shot, a fearless hunter, a skilful dancer, an expert pugilist. He was likewise a man of courage as well as of gallantry; indeed, he was known to have fought at least one duel with a subaltern officer in a marching regiment, in vindication of his right to the smiles of a pretty servant girl whom the jealous soldier took it into his head to watch too closely. But the traits of character on which, above all others, Mr. Amos piqued himself, were his unyielding resolution and his bold infidelity. Let him once pledge his word to anything, and there was no degree of trouble or expense that he would not undergo to redeem it. Let him once utter a threat, and no consideration of pity or remorse would hinder him from carrying it into execution. In like manner, his play, whether in the cock-pit, at the billiard-table, or elsewhere, was perfectly fair; and he paid his debts, as well to tradesmen as to sharpers, punctually. With respect again to religion, he held that as light as he held the restraints of moral obligation. Mr. Amos believed nothing, feared

nothing, hoped for nothing beyond the present state of existence; and he was a great deal too honest to act the hypocrite. On the contrary, Sunday was with him the busiest day in the week; and, as if to mark the contempt in which he held the prejudices of others, Sunday was the day on which he made it a rule to go abroad in his shabbiest attire. When I add, that Mr. Amos was from his boyhood a friend of the people, I have said enough to set his general character in its true light.

The arrival of bad times affected no one more distressingly than Mr. Amos. It is true that his leasehold property was still valuable, and that a man of prudent habits might have lived very comfortably upon it; but Mr. Amos's habits had never been prudent. In his vices, on the contrary, he had always been extravagant; for, besides keeping himself constantly within water-mark by the strictness with which he discharged his debts of honour, more than one female had legal claims on him for a pension. When a reverse came, therefore, Mr. Amos had no fund laid up wherewith to meet it; and he was a great deal too high-spirited to sail, as he himself expressed it, under false colours. The consequence was, that after

hanging on for a while in the groundless hope that times might mend, this singular man all at once changed his habits of living entirely. He had taken into keeping a woman of low origin, by whom he had a family. He now withdrew from society altogether, and confined himself to her. From the best dressed man in the parish he became the most perfect sloven. His game-cocks were sold, his hunters were disposed of, his groom was dismissed. With his gay companions, among whom it was hinted that the celebrated Thurtell and Hunt had been numbered, he broke off all connexion; and adopting the habits of a boor, he lived entirely in his kitchen. The character of the man, however, continued to be as fully exhibited in every action of his life as it had ever been. He was still a man of his word. In his debasement he was not less ostentatious than he had been in his elevation; and in politics and religion he became more and more liberal every day. One little statement more illustrative of the temper of his mind, and I resume my narrative.

Mr. Amos had continued to hire his sister's portion of their joint property up to the period when difficulties began to arise in settling for their small tithes with the farmers. When

this befel, he became all at once tired of the business, and having himself taken a farm in Waltham, expressed great anxiety to remove thither. Accordingly his brother-in-law was persuaded to change positions with him. No sooner was this done, however, than Mr. Amos declared himself, in all companies, an enemy to the tithe system. It was a positive robbery of the occupier; and for his part he would, though depending on it mainly for his own subsistence, lend a willing hand to get rid of it altogether. Of course such language, coming from one who was known to be himself a lessee, but who was not generally known to have sub-let his portion for a term of years, was pronounced liberal in the extreme; and when party spirit began to run high, no man proved more active, or was more looked up to among the Blues, than Mr. Amos.

It was about the hour of noon, on the day after the trial, when Marshall, after serving a customer or two, was standing at the back of his counter, that a tall stout man, dressed in a filthy fustian shooting-jacket, cord breeches clouted at the knees, grey worsted stockings, and huge hob-nailed boot-shoes, with an old blue cap upon his head and a bludgeon in his

hand, entered the shop. The trader immediately recognised the overseer, whose costume was as conspicuous as his habits were notorious; and not doubting as to the cause which had led to the honour now conferred upon him, he made haste to throw into his manner the sort of air which he calculated would best please his visitor. For, of all living men, your liberals, especially in the country, are tenacious of the respect due to their sense of personal dignity. Mr. Amos, to be sure, was not one of those who delighted in receiving marks of obsequious attention. Unprincipled—that is to say, totally wanting in religious principle—he might be; but he was manly, and had therefore no desire to be fawned upon. But he, like all others of his order, had his own notions of what was due to himself; and he never came in contact with a more exact observer of such forms than the individual before whom he now presented himself. Their salutation was accordingly blunt and straightforward on both sides, though slightly tinged—and only very slightly—with deference on the part of the grocer.

“I did not give you credit,” said Mr. Amos, “for half so much sharpness as I see you have. I confess that I was inclined to suspect you;—

at all events I had no desire to know anything about you till yesterday. But you managed that case so well that, d--n me, I believe you are one of the right sort, and I mean to become acquainted with you."

"Mr. Amos's principles are too well known, and too highly esteemed, for me not to be proud of his approbation," replied Marshall. "There is real liberality when a man goes against his own interests, and denounces a system upon which his family has thriven, because it is shown to be mischievous to his country."

"As to that," rejoined the overseer, "I take no great merit to myself. Any man with half an eye must see that this order of things can't go on; for, with the landlord first, the parson next, the tax-gatherer next, and the poor-rate to crown all, devil take me if I know how the farmer is to live. I wish I had as much power to deal with the three first of these nuisances, as I am happy to say I have to deal with the last."

"The poor-rates are a great burthen, without doubt," observed Marshall. "But how are the poor to do without parish relief? To be sure, if we had church property applied to its legiti-

mate uses, then nobody would feel the burthen ; but, till that time comes, it won't do to let the poor man go without bread."

"That is, Mr. Marshall, you shopkeepers don't object to a high poor-rate, because the paupers are able, in consequence, to lay out more money across your counters. But that won't do for me. No, curse me ! I have no notion of paying a man more than he earns ; and if he don't earn sixpence, why should the parish be bound to make up his wages to two shillings ?"

"It seems very hard, I admit. Still, remember that the poor man must live ; and that the more heavily you and I, and others like us, are burthened to keep him, the better disposed shall we be, when the proper time comes, to set all to rights by a few healthy changes."

"That is, Marshall, you would like to unship kings and bishops and lords, and all that sort of nonsense ; and to have nobody that would pretend to hold his head higher than yours and mine."

"There would be some good in that, doubtless," replied the trader ; "but even that of itself would not do. What right has Lord

"No, curse you! not a farthing," answered the overseer. "I gave you orders to come every day; and if you don't choose to obey them, you shall get no relief from me. I suppose you were at work, if the truth was known, and want now to get double pay?"

"Indeed, sir, I was not able to work. Indeed, sir, I have been in bed these three days; and my family might have starved, but for the charity of some kind gentlefolks in the town. And if you don't give me my pay now, we shall be turned into the street, and all our goods seized."

"You and your goods may all go to the devil for me!" answered the overseer. "Have you a doctor's certificate?"

"I have not, sir. I could not afford to pay for a doctor, and I thought my own looks would answer for me."

"You always looked like a hang-dog, I know," was the rejoinder, "and you keep your beauty wonderfully. But you may take your sweet face out of this as soon as you please; for, I tell you, you shall get nothing."

"Then I'll see what Colonel Hamilton will say to it," answered the man, bridling up.

"Do you threaten me, you rascal?" ex-

claimed the overseer. "If you don't make yourself scarce, I'll break your bones; and then you will have a better tale to tell when you are about it."

The pauper withdrew; but neither Mr. Amos nor Marshall had an opportunity of making a remark, when another entered.

"Please, sir, can you set me to work? I haven't had a job these three days, and am half-starved. I am willing to work for any wages you please to offer, so that I may keep soul and body together."

"What! is this you, Dick Solley? Isn't it a disgrace to a young man like you to apply to a parish officer for work or relief either? You might have been, and ought to have been, as well off as e'er a man in the parish. Besides, you are a single man; you have nobody to keep. How the devil do you expect that the parish should find work for you, when there are so many married men out of employ?"

"I don't ask for a married man's wages,—but I can't live upon air," replied Dick; "and, if I can't find work elsewhere, where am I to go but to the parish?"

"Why doesn't your brother find you in work? I have no job for you. All the jobs

that the parish has must be kept for married men. D—n you ! don't you hear ?" repeated he, stamping his foot ; " must I say the same thing over and over again ? I tell you I have no work for you ; and if I had, you should not have it."

The man slunk away, muttering something which could not be distinctly overheard ; while Mr. Amos, turning round, observed to his new acquaintance—" Can anything be more disgusting than all this ! Here we are ground to the earth by the parsons, the aristocracy, and the Government ; and required over and above to keep a set of lazy, idle rascals, who never do a day's work when you set them to it, and whose work, if it were ever so well done, would not make good their wages. For my part, I see only one cure for the evil. We must have Parliamentary Reform ; and that will soon lead to a reduction of taxes and tithes and rents, and to a system of managing the poor which will at least make labour worth paying for. In the mean while, it is my duty, as overseer, to manage the affairs of the parish as economically as I can ; and my chief object in calling here to-day was to desire that you send a dozen pounds of molasses to the workhouse.

The parishioners have hitherto very absurdly given the old and the sick wretches there expensive beer, made of malt and hops. If they must have beer,—for which I see no use,—I am determined that they shall have it at the most moderate rate; and as I have tried the molasses beer in my own family, I don't see why they should not have it in the workhouse. So, be sure you send up a dozen pounds some time this afternoon."

Marshall promised to attend to the order; and the overseer withdrew.

CHAPTER IV.

PARISH POLITICS.

IF the season immediately preceding the harvest be in most districts one of considerable difficulty, particularly where there chances to be a redundant pauper population, the harvest itself, with the hopping that succeeds it, is a period of abundance, and of course of contentment. Harsh as the treatment received by the paupers might have been, therefore, no consequences worthy of notice immediately followed: for the sick man continued to find chance friends till he was capable of earning a subsistence for his family; and Dick Solley the bachelor got from time to time a day's work at Crackstakes, out of the profits of which, with such odd shillings as he picked up elsewhere, he made shift to live. But Time in his progress soon brought round the gloomy months, when, however willing the agriculturist may be,

he is incapacitated from finding employment out of doors for more than a very limited number of workmen. It was to no purpose that vestry-meetings assembled in Waltham to devise schemes which scarcely came into operation ere they fell to pieces: no permanent benefit accrued from them. Indeed, it was admitted on all hands, both by paupers and rate-payers, that though they had seen many bad winters, they had never witnessed one to be compared with this: for the former class bitterly complained over their ale and newspaper at the Anchor, that the gentlemen not only took no interest in their case, but added insult to oppression; while the latter protested, that they neither could nor would much longer endure the constantly increasing burthen of the cess. Of course the animosity of both was more and more exasperated by the comments of the writers, whose essays both delighted to study; till in the end it might have been foretold by the most careless observer that a rupture sooner or later would take place.

“Why is it, after all, Dick,” said Marshall one evening to the younger Solley, “that your brother does not find you in constant work? He is at least as well off as any farmer in the

wherewith to pay his shot. At first the chief business of the club was to drink and be merry. But when the bad times came, and money grew scarce, a new species of excitement took the place of intoxication, and men learned to keep their faculties under the control of something like reason, that they might exercise them in discussing the affairs of state, and the conduct and characters of their neighbours. It was then that the practice began, to which I have elsewhere alluded, and to which countenance was given by persons who, in some instances, believed that they were doing right, of having a newspaper read aloud for the edification of the club. Of course the paper introduced into such society could only be one of those which minister to the bad passions of the multitude; for it has not yet come to pass, either that the poor voluntarily seek for moral instruction in such places as the alehouse, or that the friends of order exert themselves to get the publications of which they approve circulated through so humble a channel. While therefore there sprang up everywhere a desire for information, accompanied by the habit of reasoning and commenting on the kind of knowledge obtained, no pains were taken to use it as an

instrument of good ; and it became, as it always will when left to run wild, a terrible engine of mischief.

It had not escaped the observation of the persons who conducted this print, that in exact proportion to the zeal with which they seemed to espouse the quarrel of the poor against the rich, their own circulation became extended. By pouring out unceasing abuse upon the aristocracy and the clergy they had done something ; they calculated that by turning their battery against the employers, and writing exclusively for the employed, they might do more. The experiment was tried, and proved quite successful. At first, indeed, the more respectable among the Blues objected to a system of perpetual libel, and refused to give their countenance to a publication which, however sound in its general views, committed gross injustice when treating of particular cases. So long, indeed, as the Rev. A. B., or Squire D., or Lord E., were the only sufferers, no great harm was done ; but, when the editor began to protest against lowering the men's wages, to speak sneeringly of bull-frogs and harshly of parish tyrants, the case became different. And when at last he ventured to as-

sert that every farmer was an enemy to the poor who, in such times, dared to thresh out his corn by machinery, a buzz of indignation was heard in all quarters. Still there appeared, from time to time, so good an article on tithes, taxes, rents, or bloated parsons, that to discountenance entirely a fellow of such excellent wit and sterling ability could not be thought of. Therefore Mr. Sankey, Mr. Rigden, Mr. Amos, and such as they, continued not only themselves to read, but to circulate among the men, the Kent Mercury; fully assured that the men would forget all that was said disrespectfully of themselves, while they remembered only the lashings which were given to the classes above them.

Mr. Sankey, Mr. Rigden, and Mr. Amos, were not, any more than other men, gifted with the faculty of perfect prescience. The memories of the labouring people proved more tenacious than they had anticipated, and their judgments were of a far sounder order than had been supposed. The very same authority which required them to believe that all parsons were rapacious, and all men in authority corrupt, assured them that their own masters were brutes, and that no man possessed

of the feelings of a man could fill the office of parish overseer. Again, the people saw that where a threshing-machine is used, there is no need of men working with flails in the barns; and they perceived, both outwardly in their bodies and inwardly in their outraged feelings, that the overseer of Waltham, at least, was not given to temper power with mildness. From day to day, moreover, their own wages had been lowered. Single men, indeed, found it difficult to exist at all, no matter how willing, or how industrious; and married persons grumbled when they looked back upon the times when families received pay, not according to their earnings, but their necessities. Besides all this, the Kent Mercury told them, that if the farmers spoke the truth when they asserted that the land would not pay for cultivation, they were without excuse in not permitting portions of it to go into the hands of the poor. In one word, the labouring classes at Waltham began gradually to lose their relish for general sentences of condemnation fulminated against the aristocracy, and to suspect that there was a great deal of truth in the short but biting sarcasms which pointed to the poor man's enemies as moving in a sphere closer to their own.

Mr. Marshall had been the poor man's friend from the beginning; he was now more than ever prompt with the expressions of his commiseration. A regular attendant at the club, he not only never repressed the comments of those around him, but made a way for them. He was, however, a decided enemy to everything like outrage or violence. The poor were no match, at least such was his conviction, for the farmers, with the magistrate and the soldiers at their back; and therefore any attempt to rebel or strike work, whatever it might do in manufacturing places, must in Waltham end in increasing the general distress. No: his advice was, to annoy and pester the employers by every practicable means; since they were paid only half wages, to do only half a day's work; to marry as fast as ever they could; and so let the bull-frogs reap the fruits of their own narrow policy. And Mr. Marshall's recommendations were acted upon with great alacrity. Every day some instance occurred of a young man taking a wife, and coming within the week to the parish for relief; while, in exact proportion to the increase in population, was the decay of industry and every other rural virtue in the place.

The occupiers were not all so blind as to fail of observing these occurrences, nor so prejudiced as to miscalculate their probable results. The more violent politicians affected, indeed, to rejoice; for they were sure that the evil, when it rose to a height, would work its own cure. But in the vestry there was still a majority of reasonable persons who set themselves to the task of devising palliatives for a disease for which they despaired of finding a cure. A small farm, which happened at this time to become vacant, and of which the rents were paid to some charitable institution, was hired by the parish-officers. Thither it was determined that the surplus labourers should be sent; and as it was determined to cultivate the land entirely by the spade, hopes were entertained that not only would steady employment be found for the men, but that it might prove not absolutely profitless. Unfortunately, however, the plan was no sooner arranged, than it led to a system of dealing between the farmer and the labourer, which could not fail of increasing the discontent that already prevailed. Hitherto each occupier had been in the habit of keeping a certain quota of men, whom he employed as advantageously for himself as circumstances

would allow, but whom he never thought of absolutely dismissing. Now, the parish farm was regarded as a sort of resource against every emergency. Did a wet day befall, the farmer instantly discharged the whole body of his men, who, flocking to the overseer for relief, were by him transferred to the parish farm, where they worked in gangs. Nay, nor was this the worst of it.

Hitherto care had been taken to employ, as steady labourers, only married men with large families. The reverse became henceforth the practice, and for obvious reasons. To a married man with four or five children nobody thought of paying less than thirteen and sixpence a week. But a single man could be got for six, a married man without children for nine, and both the one and the other did as much work for his money as the father of the largest family. It was no longer the policy of the farmer to keep the large family out of his private resources, by giving to the head of it steady employ: on the contrary, as the parish paid for the labour of the farm at the very same rate with private individuals, it was much better for Mr. Amos to get his lands cultivated by single men, seeing that he saved one half

his previous outlay, without injuring any person except the parish. Thus was a scheme, devised with the best intentions in the world, perverted by mismanagement into the source of evil; while the consequences of bringing into gangs men fretful, idle, and therefore discontented, it required no gift of prophecy to foretel.

Such was the condition, political and moral, at which the parish of Waltham had arrived, when Giles Solley heard, to his amazement, the name of his brother Richard united, in a publication from the desk in church, with that of Keziah Sacket, spinster. From the period of his re-establishment at Crackstakes he had, on principle, kept very much aloof from his brother: for Giles, though a just, and in many respects a generous man, was somewhat stern in his moral creed; and the offences of which Dick had been guilty, more especially in robbing his mother, were such as Giles knew not how to forgive. To say the truth, likewise, Dick, either because his habits were unhappily fixed, or that he did not venture to look Giles in the face, came about Crackstakes as seldom as possible. Never, indeed, unless when driven to his last shift, would he apply to his brother

for work ; and his brother either did not know, or did not choose to know, how he was circumstanced, till personally appealed to. It was to no purpose that their mother endeavoured, from time to time, to rekindle that love between them, which, when in such cases it once goes out, goes out for ever. Giles never refused his brother assistance when their mother applied for it, and permitted him occasionally to eat and drink under the roof where he was born, without complaining ; but he steadily declined to treat him as he was treated of old.

“ No, mother,” was his constant answer, as often as Mrs. Solley threw out a hint tending to that consummation ; “ I can never consent to deal with Dick again as with a brother. The follies of youth might have been got over, the errors of manhood might have been forgiven ; but to take to my heart one who brought you to the workhouse by an act for which his life was forfeited had you chosen to prosecute, that would indeed be to confound right and wrong with a vengeance. If Dick would consent to go to America, he should have the means, and welcome ; for I confess that his presence here is neither creditable nor useful. But he shall never have it in his

cept his younger brother and sister : so
speak to me again about receiving him
this roof ; for I tell you that, had I my
will, he should not darken these doors
as a visiter.”

as Solley possessed all the stubbornness of
his race and nation, and therefore his mother
could not importune him ; while Dick was left
to the very same chances that befel other
men about the place.

for work ; and his brother either did not know or did not choose to know, how he was distressed, till personally appealed to. It was no purpose that their mother endeavored from time to time, to rekindle that affection between them, which, when in such case, goes out, goes out for ever. Giles never asked his brother assistance when their mother was for it, and permitted him occasionally to sit and drink under the roof where he was without complaining ; but he steadily refused to treat him as he was treated of.

"No mother" was his constant

CHAPTER V.

FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS.

THE parish of Waltham had for some time been in a feverish and unsettled state, when Giles Solley, to his indescribable horror and amazement, heard the curate one morning couple the name of his brother Richard with that of Keziah Sacket as affianced bride and bridegroom. Now Keziah Sacket was one of those loose characters that are to be found in almost all country places. She was already the mother of two children, which she had sworn to two different persons; and, unless report spoke with more than usual exaggeration, her habits were immoral and dissolute in the extreme. I have already said that between Giles and Dick Solley no cordiality subsisted. Nevertheless, the former still retained so much of natural feeling for his brother, as well as of regard to the good name of the family, that the idea of

such a marriage, as it had never entered into his mind as possible, so, when thus suddenly forced upon him, it affected him very deeply. He could scarcely sit out with common decorum the service of the church; and the moment it ended, he took up his hat and walked away. "Thank God, my mother was not here to-day!" was the first exclamation to which he gave utterance; "and I must go and see whether this mad step may not be arrested in sufficient time to save her from the distress which the bare rumour of it could not but occasion."

Giles hurried from the church to his brother's lodgings, at the house of a widow-woman, about a stone's throw from the village; but found, on arriving there, that Dick was absent. He had gone out early, and the widow neither knew whither he went nor when he might be expected back. Chagrined and annoyed at his failure thus far, Giles turned his face homewards; and, skirting the village, was conducted by a narrow pathway through the fields towards a small but notorious beer-shop, which stood alone beyond the reach of all observation, being far apart from every other dwelling. For among other measures designed for the relief of

the agricultural interests, and with a view to increase the comforts and blessings of the poor, I forgot to mention that the sale-of-beer act had been passed; one of those judicious operations of the legislature, which, seeking only to increase the public revenue, leave public morals to the mercy of private temptation. Giles was approaching this den of the worst description of vices, when he saw three men issue from the door,—one of whom turned off in an opposite direction, while two advanced to meet him. He was not slow in discovering that one of these was Mr. Marshall the grocer, while the other was Richard; and little as he felt disposed to hold converse with the former, his desire to communicate with the latter would not permit him to avoid them. It was evident enough that Dick had been drinking: still, his senses were not entirely stupified; so, when his brother saluted him, he returned the salute properly, and did not object to engage in a conversation, into which the other seemed anxious to draw him.

“I want a word with you, Dick,” was Giles’s address; “and I want to have it alone.”

“Surely, surely,” replied Dick; “I will

follow you directly.—Mr. Marshall, I dare say my brother has not a great deal to say.”

“That depends on circumstances,” answered Giles. “However, I have no wish to take you away from your friend, if there be any important matter under discussion.”

“Oh! none in the world, I assure you,” interposed Marshall: “we can settle our little affair at any time; for you, Richard, know where to find me whenever you are at leisure.”

So saying, Marshall walked on; while Dick, wheeling round, trod step by step beside his brother, though with the air of one conscious that he is in communication with a superior who has just cause to be offended with him.

“You and Marshall seem sworn friends,” observed Giles, after they had proceeded some time in silence; “I hope you find your associate as useful as he is agreeable; yet I think you would have been as well employed this morning in church as at that beer-shop.”

“We had a little business of importance to transact,” replied Dick, diffidently: “it is not a common practice of mine to spend Sunday morning in a beer-shop, nor of Mr. Marshall neither, I do assure you.”

"Very likely," answered Giles; "nor is it any business of mine to inquire into your habits. But there is one act which you seem disposed to perform, against which I do think that I am entitled to protest, because it will affect the credit of your whole family, and of course mine and your mother's, as well as your own."

"Indeed! brother; and what may that be?"

"You are going to marry, I find; indeed your bans were published to-day."

"Well, and why not? Am I not of age to judge for myself? Am I to consult you and my mother in this matter also?"

"I don't want you to consult me in anything, Dick; but I do want you to have a little regard to the credit of the name you bear. That woman would disgrace the family of the county hangman: you cannot, surely, intend to marry her?"

"I don't understand you."

"Not understand me! Come, Dick, don't equivocate; and, above all, don't palter with me. Your name was coupled with that of Keziah Sacket in the publication of bans: was this done with your sanction?"

"To be sure it was," replied Dick; "and devil take me if I understand what business

sum, ever since you returned;—by the labour of my hands; whenever any kind stranger shall please to set me to a job; by parochial relief when no job is to be had. Keep a wife, indeed! D—n me! the parish which won't employ me as a single man shall keep both me and her."

"So you are one of those that intend to carry out of spite to the parish?"

"Ay, to be sure I am. And why not? It was only last Wednesday that Mr. Amos, your overseer, refused to take any notice of me because I was single; and is it not out of favour to him that I, and others in the same circumstances, have come to the resolution of getting wives? Bawds! the overseer shall never be without an excuse again in my case; on that I am quite resolved."

"Dick," answered Giles, with some difficulty controlling his temper, "let us discuss this matter calmly like brothers. You have no fancy for that vile woman—you cannot have any; and you are going to sacrifice your own peace, and the feelings of your family, in order to indulge a momentary fit of spleen against Mr. Amos? Why should you do this? Why not rather strive to put yourself again on good

terms with the world, and become what you once were, and leave behind you a name such as was left to you by your father. Thoughtless, weak, profligate, you have been; but even now it is not too late to recover, provided you abstain from hanging round your own neck a stone that must inevitably sink you."

"Giles," replied Richard, in some degree softened by the matter of this address, though not so much so as to fail of observing that the manner was scarcely in keeping,—“all that you say would be sufficiently just had I anything to fall back upon. Show me how I am to re-establish a character—tell me even by what means I am to earn a livelihood, and your arguments will have their due weight with me. But you might just as reasonably speak to the east wind, and forbid it to bring a blight, as talk to a ruined and a destitute man of recovering his place in society. Have I either a character or a home?"

"And whose fault is it that you have neither?" demanded Giles gruffly.

"Partly my own, partly yours, brother," was the reply, delivered in a dogged tone, though with great affectation of levity. "I

certainly threw my good name behind me, and you have taken especial care that I should never be in a situation to go back and look for it."

"Well then, Dick," exclaimed Giles, somewhat touched by this remark, "it shall not be so any longer. You shall have an opportunity of looking for your good name, and by a process too which, unless you be wanting to yourself, will be sure to restore it. What say you? are you disposed to emigrate?"

"What! go to America? No, brother,—not quite that, neither; and yet, God knows! there are few ties that bind me to this country."

"I ask again," demanded Giles, his sternness restored by this show of opposition on Richard's part, "are you disposed to emigrate?—because, if you are, I am willing and ready to pay your passage, to give you a trifle of money in your pocket, and to get for you what recommendations I can to persons who may be likely to lend you help in the New World. But, remember that I offer to help you thus on the express conditions, first, that you cast Keriah adrift at once; and next, that you enter into securities never to show your face again in this country."

"A most kind and brotherly proposal, I

must say," replied Dick, "and delivered in a tone every way worthy of the feeling that prompted it. Now mark me, Giles; I know your purpose in this perfectly. You want to get rid of me, that's all; and you don't care a straw whether it be by sending me to America or to the bottom of the sea. I conceive, therefore, that I owe you no thanks for the tender of your assistance. But I will tell you what I will do. Your proposition shall receive the most careful consideration. If, after I have slept upon it, I make up my mind to close, you shall either see or hear from me early to-morrow: if I determine not to close, it will be useless to return to the charge; for I can be determined when I like, as well as you; and, though I don't bully, I flatter myself that no one can accuse me of lack of courage. So, if this is all you wanted with me, I have given you my answer; and I suppose you scarce desire my company to Crackstakes?"

"I am not given to tell lies, even to serve my own purposes," answered Giles coldly; "and therefore I will not deny that you are pretty correct in your guess. I do want to send you out of this neighbourhood—not more because I would gladly take away from my own eyes a

living monument of follies past, than because I would keep you, if I could, from the danger of committing new follies, into which it is highly probable that you are going to rush. And so, as we perfectly understand one another, it would serve no purpose if I were to say that I did desire your company at Crackstakes. I hope, for your own sake, that you will communicate with me early to-morrow, and in the mean while I wish you good-day."

"Good-day, good-day!" answered Dick, turning sharp round upon his heel;—"good-day to my most conscientious and honourable brother. As to communicating to-morrow, that will be as it happens. However, good-day, good-day!"

Dick hurried off, as he uttered these words, in a long irregular trot; his pace giving sure evidence of the distracted state of his mind, and of the struggle which was needed to keep his passion from bursting forth. The motions of Giles, on the other hand, were deliberate and steady;—no incorrect emblem of a disposition which, as I have already hinted, with much in it that was noble and just, was become, in consequence of many different causes, stern and unbending. Neither the affected lightness

oppression of his brother's feelings did on him any sensible effect: his ill brooded over the past delin—the youth, and the probable mis—the man, till he had well-nigh himself into a persuasion that he was g unnecessary trouble in seeking his last act of folly and indiscre—at can it matter, after all,”—such our of his meditations,—“what a lost to every sense of right and does or suffers? As to his family, dy done to it all the injury that he r himself—hang him! why should ly else care what he suffers? Yet other, too;—ay, but what kind of He was never to hold converse with again; and what did he do?—elf with the scoundrel in all man-ry; cheated his mother out of one er property, plundered her of the brought her and his brother and e workhouse,—and me, and them, nected with him, to shame. No, im! let him do as he pleases;—I myself about him no more.”

the channel into which Giles's

thoughts had turned long ere he reached the door of his own house. When he entered the hall, therefore, he appeared gloomy, and his brow was clouded; and his mother, who had experienced considerable alarm in consequence of his unusually protracted absence, saw that all was not right with him. She hastened to inquire into the cause, and he told her without reserve.

"O Giles!" exclaimed she, while the tear stood in her eye, "I wish that I could persuade you to forgive that unhappy boy as freely as I forgive him. Remember that he is of your own flesh and blood; guilty, doubtless, and weak—yet still your brother and my son; and that if we entirely turn our backs on him, he can have no hope nor any desire to reform, either here or elsewhere. You are too strict in your dealings with him, Giles—indeed you are."

"Mother," replied Giles, "if I find it difficult to forget—for I deny that I have not forgiven,—but if I find it difficult to forget, it is on your account, not on my own, that my memory is so tenacious. To find you as I did—"

"My dear, dear son!" exclaimed the widow, throwing herself into his arms, "say no more

, and you might, in ending gain, even if you had come as a d have more than compensated to at I suffered. Was it not a trial ? and if I bore it as became me, of it, except with thankfulness? or boy ! Oh that he were what innocent and respected !”

t, mother, he can never be ;—no, d neither,—at least here. And as him into the family, I am sure desire that. There would be no these walls, either for you or me, admitted.”

not,” answered his mother ; “ in- not, for I see that he and you put it up : but at least some t be given him.”

other, he shall have a chance. I h made up my mind to withdraw

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to them, he will a
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Crackstakes with ever
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Giles, indeed, seemed
over his temper, and
having done so; while
taking their tone from
scarce knew why.

CHAPTER VI.

CLOUDS IN THE HORIZON.

"WELL, Dick," said Mr. Marshall to the younger Solley when, with flushed cheek and an excited air, he burst into the grocer's parlour, "what might that Solomon of a brother of yours want? if one may venture to ask."

"Oh, nothing in the world," replied Dick, "except, first, to put a stop to my marriage, and then to ship me off with as little delay as possible to America."

"To do what?" demanded Marshall.

"To ship me off to America. Don't I speak plain enough? To ship me off to America, I say—to America. Do you understand that?"

"Devil take me if I do! That Giles Solley, Esq. should be unwilling to have his pure blood contaminated by an alliance between his heir-at-law and a young lady of such humble pre-

tensions as Miss Keziah Sacket, I do understand; but why he should desire to ship you for America, it passes my poor wit to divine."

"Now, Marshall, if I did not know that you now and then could pretend to be ignorant of a thing or two, I should pronounce you a more decided noodle than people give you credit for. Don't you see that if I were once on the other side of the water, my tender-hearted brother would be relieved from all claims on my part, besides getting rid of a sight that constantly reminds him of the past, and makes his pride rankle? D—n me if ever I heard of such a proposal!"

"And you mean to close with it, of course?"

"Me!—no, by all that's amiable! If I were without another motive for marrying Keziah, I should find one in the idea of vexing Giles: and when that is joined to the thought of spiting the parish, who could desire more?"

"You judge rightly, Dick,—depend upon it you do. America is a fine country, I make no doubt; it is the land of freedom: but America is not your country; and there is no reason why you or I should be driven away like convicts from the place of our birth, where there is such an abundance of good things scattered

about, were we only permitted to have our share of them."

"Ay, Marshall, there 's the rub! Plenty of good things, doubtless; but of what benefit are they to poor devils like me, who see, but dare not taste nor handle them?"

"I do think," observed Marshall, "that it is the hardest of all cases, that, in a country like this, there should be so much as one human being in a condition to say that he ever desired the necessaries of life, yet was unable to procure them."

"Hard! it is worse than hard. If we were either unable or unwilling to work, something might be said for it. But here am I, in the very vigour of life, begging for employment as if I were asking a kingdom; cringing before an overseer for leave to toil my strength out, and refused,—ay, and cursed and sworn at for asking. It is enough to drive a man mad."

"And to see the quantity of corn these men are hoarding up! Only look at their stack-yards and barns, how they groan with the weight of that food which is denied to you, and to thousands like you! It would be no bad job to set fire to one of these hoards: hang me if I would lend a hand to put it out!"

"I wish to God I saw that fellow Amos's premises on fire ! I don't think he would find many hands forward to work the engines."

"But where's the use of wishing, Dick ? If wishing would fill men's bellies and replenish their pockets, there would be neither a poor nor a hungry wretch in the world. Give me the man that has the courage to *do*, and I will show him how to do it both safely and surely."

"Will you, by G—d ?" cried Dick. "I hate that ruffian,—I hate them all, Giles included,—so bitterly, that if I saw but a chance of escaping the gallows, I would go round the parish this very night, and fire every stack-yard in it. Only tell me how to set about it, and, d—n me, I am your man."

"Not now, Dick," replied Marshall,—"*not now*: you are heated with drink and your brother's conversation. You could not be trusted to-night. But don't allow the feeling to die away. You and all other poor men have the best right to be angry ; and, take my word for it, you have no worse enemies than these bull-frogs. Just see how the brutes behave ! They won't so much as employ threshers in the barns, but must have the work done with machinery. If I were a labourer, the

devil a threshing-machine would I leave unbroken in the parish."

"You say right, Marshall; by heavens you do! These threshing-machines are the cause of all our distress. Let us go out this very moment, and, getting some of the best fellows about us, let us begin at Sankey's, and smash the whole of them within a circle of three miles round."

Dick started up as he spoke, but was again restrained by his more cautious and calculating confederate. The latter immediately proved to him that to embark upon such an enterprise till after their plans had been fully arranged, would be to ensure defeat with all its consequences; whereas the exercise of a week's patience, and a judicious employment of the interval, could not but render success certain. But it was agreed between them that to sit much longer patiently under the burthens which were thrown upon the labouring classes, would indicate not only the total absence of spirit from among the people, but an indifference to the claims of moral justice. Neither were the friends less decided in the conclusion to which they arrived relative to the line of conduct which it behoved Dick, in his individual capacity, to follow.

He swore a solemn oath that he would hold no communication with his brother on the morrow ; that the treaty of marriage between him and Miss Sacket should go on ; and that he would meet Mr. Marshall by seven on the following evening at the same beer-shop where they had spent, with so much mutual profit, the greater part of that Sunday. Finally, one or two trusty individuals were named, with whom it was esteemed prudent to hold council ; and this strange conference, if such it may be called, broke up : for Marshall had some other engagement to which he was obliged to attend ; while Dick, repairing to the Anchor, spent there the little that remained to him of last week's earnings, and then, in a state of absolute indifference both to the pleasures and the pains of life, reeled home to bed.

I have alluded to the parish farm, to which all the unemployed married men were sent in Waltham. It was under the superintendence of a person hired for the purpose ; one of those busy, gossiping, easy-tempered, plausible people, who make it their study to aim at the good opinion of their superiors, and very generally succeed. Will Watt was a bachelor of fifty, who, though not a native of the place, had

spent so many years in it, that he was now justly accounted one of its marked features. Inheriting some trifling property, he eked it out by working occasionally as a glover, by keeping the turnpike-gate, by acting as sexton, beadle, and collector of the poor-rates, and now by superintending the management of the parish farm. Kind-hearted and singularly obliging, Will had generally a word to say in favour of all that deserved it; and though too honest to speak well of such as would have belied his recommendation, he very rarely indulged in censure. To be sure, Will had about him no slight share of what passes current under the head of old-womanishness. He was a thorough gossip; knew all the tittle-tattle of the place; delighted in making himself useful; could mix a caudle, brew beer, nurse a child, and fat a pig, with any one in the neighbourhood; and, like honest Jack Falstaff, not only possessed a large portion of wit himself, but was the cause of wit in others. Moreover, Will was a great antiquary; could give you the history of every monument in the church; and, having cleaned and furbished them up with great care, delighted in nothing so much as displaying them to strangers. But the qua-

lities which secured for him the general esteem of his neighbours were, first, his incorruptible integrity; and next, a more than ordinary obsequiousness of manner. Such was the individual who shuffled his tall, spare figure every morning from the toll-house to the farm, in order to assign to each of the unemployed labourers his task, and who received from them at night, when what was called their work had ended, an account of what they had done, as well as the tools with which they had accomplished it.

For some time previous to the Sunday which was spent by Mr. Marshall and Dick Solley as I have just described, Will Watt had perceived symptoms of growing discontent among his men. They complained that the work to which they were put was worse than useless. The land, they said, had been dug over and over again, till it was on all parts of the farm as fine as saw-dust; and as no signs were afforded of cropping it, there appeared to be no end to the digging. Neither were they mindful of the cants which he set out for them. They would begin, indeed, while he stood by, to handle their spades and hoes lazily; but his back was no sooner turned,

than they laid them down; then, collecting into groups and gangs of a dozen or twenty, they either bandied one from the other some rude jests, or stood in close consultation, speaking in an under-tone, and gathering each man his brows like a gathering storm. Will had been so much struck with the threatening aspect of affairs, that he considered it his duty to make a report to the overseer, by whom it was received with the contempt which he was accustomed to manifest whenever danger formed the subject of his conversation. Nevertheless, Will, though silenced, was not satisfied; so he took the first opportunity of stating before the committee the nature of his own suspicions.

It will be borne in mind that, at the period to which my narrative refers, serious disturbances had already occurred in various parts of Kent. Misled by the common enemies of rich and poor, the labouring people had risen in several parishes, and, marching in force through their respective neighbourhoods, had broken to pieces the threshing-machines both of farmers and landlords. Nothing can be more easy, after men have had time for reflection, than to blame the supineness of

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2. Once the problem is identified, the next step is to define the objectives and goals of the project. This helps to clarify what needs to be achieved and provides a clear direction for the work.

3. The third step is to develop a plan or strategy to address the problem. This involves breaking down the problem into smaller, manageable tasks and determining the resources and timeline needed to complete them.

4. The fourth step is to implement the plan. This involves putting the strategy into action and monitoring progress regularly to ensure that the project is on track.

5. The final step is to evaluate the results of the project. This involves assessing the outcomes against the objectives and goals, identifying any challenges or lessons learned, and determining the next steps.

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conceiving that more might be done by lenity than by harshness, took from the culprits an acknowledgment of their fault, with a promise of better behaviour in time coming; and then, after an imprisonment of three days, dismissed them to their homes.

It is quite certain that the chairman, while passing this lenient sentence on the rioters, assured them that the bench acted under an impression that they had been misled; and gave them full warning, that if ever they, or any others of their class, came before him again under similar circumstances, he should deal with them very differently. It is equally certain that the deluded men heard this threat without believing that the gentlemen on the bench possessed power to carry it into execution. An opinion, on the contrary, got abroad, that to break any number of threshing-machines would subject the perpetrators to no more than three days' imprisonment. Still, for a fortnight or three weeks, there was a sort of calm throughout the country, not unlike to that which, in tropical climates, is said to precede the tornado. The unthinking, or the very sanguine, were, however, the only description of persons who affected to be-

lieve that it would continue; and Will Watt, whatever his failings in other respects might be, did not belong to either class.

"You may say just what you please, Mr. Amos," observed Will, when the committee was assembled, and as yet none of the paupers had been called in; "I tell you there's a shocking bad spirit among the men; and unless something be done to disperse them, and give them regular employ, I won't be answerable for the consequences."

"Just like you, Will," answered Mr. Amos with a sneer; "frightened at your own shadow. A capital hand at managing sick old women, but quite unfit to deal with healthy men!—A bad spirit among them! Curse them, I know there is!—there's a spirit of idleness and profligacy, which we must put down, or by G— they will put us down!"

"Well, mind, I've told you; and if anything does happen, you can't blame me. It's my belief, that if things continue as they are another week, you will all hear of it."

"Then they shall not continue as they are!" replied the overseer fiercely. "No, d—n them! since they are dissatisfied with the treatment they get, they shall receive such as I

think they deserve. It is perfect extravagance to pay these people at the rate we have been doing. Twelve shillings a week are more than any labouring man can spend; I am quite sure it is more than any labouring man earns; and as to those lazy rascals on the farm, I will not pay one of them more than nine shillings."

"No, no, Amos!" exclaimed his fellow-parishioners; "that won't do to-day, at all events. The men went to the farm with the understanding that they were to get twelve shillings; it will never do to cut them down without warning."

"I suppose, gentlemen," answered Mr. Amos, "when you put me in office as overseer, you saddled me with the responsibility of managing the poor, and of being accountable for my mode of management. Now, as I hold it to be my first duty to save the public money in every way that I can, either I must be permitted to choose my own course, or to resign."

"Good God!" cried Giles Solley, "you don't mean to begin your system of reduction to-day? The people have had no warning, and you hear they are already discontented. Is it your intention to stir up rioting in Waltham also? I tell you, there is grumbling enough about

your treacle-beer, and other twopenny-half-penny savings, in the house; and if you carry the same spirit without-doors, we shall probably all live to repent it."

"Are you white-livered also?" cried Mr. Amos: "I thought the general of King Baboo's armies had learned to overcome his fears."

"I am no bully, certainly," replied Giles; "though perhaps I may have as good courage as my neighbours. But I will tell you what I have which some of them have not—bowels of compassion for the poor. How are a man and his wife, and half-a-dozen children, to keep soul and body together on nine shillings a week?"

"To be sure, a man must have prodigious bowels of compassion who permits his own brother to become chargeable to the parish," answered Mr. Amos with a sneer. "But that is neither here nor there: I tell you plump, that I will pay no man this day more than nine shillings; and I fancy that this meeting has neither the power nor the will to pay more. What is it to me how they live?—I have only to consider what they earn."

"Then I for one," said Giles, "will not sit here to give my countenance to acts of such

"What! reduce our pay too!" exclaimed the man. "D—n me, we can't stand that! Don't you mean to give us the other three?"

"I have told you what I mean to do," answered the overseer; "and you know that I never say one thing and do another. You have got your money—you may be off."

"Off with that! No,—blow me tight if I do! You may keep your nine shillings and be d—d; I'll go to Colonel Hamilton and see what he says to it."

So saying, the man threw down the money on the table, and flung from the room. A like result attended the applications of five or six more; several of whom threatened, while one went so far as to throw out a hint that Mr. Amos might be a monstrous fine fellow, but that he was not a match for a whole parish. Meanwhile, without in the waiting-room there was a clamour of voices, as if Bedlam had broken loose. "We'll serve him out for this yet; we'll see whether he is to tyrannise over us! Let him look to his threshing-machine. He got it spick-and-span new only last summer; we advise him to sell it cheap to anybody that will bid for it."—On Mr. Amos, however, all this threatening produced no effect: it seemed indeed but to con-

firm him in his determination; for, opening the door, he stood in the midst of them perfectly undaunted.

"I tell you what it is, you d—d scoundrels!" cried he; "if you choose to take your money, I am here to give it; if not, I desire that you will go about your business, and feed your families the best way you can."

"We will take what we used to get, and forget all," exclaimed several voices.

"You shall not take what you used to get," replied Amos; "and as to your forgetting or not forgetting, that is a matter of no moment to me. I am not to be bullied like some others, and you know it."

"You'll repent this, Amos," shouted some one in the middle of the throng. "That smart machine of yours can be broken as well as other people's."

"Very likely," answered Amos; "but let me see the man that will try to break it: he shall have a bullet through his body first, as sure as my name is Amos."

"Curse your bullet, and you too!" exclaimed several voices. "But never mind now, men. Let's be off to Colonel Hamilton's and see what he will do for us. If we don't suc-

ceed there, then we must try some other method."

"Hurrah, hurrah for Colonel Hamilton's!" Then with loud shouts the whole body rushed from the workhouse, and were soon seen marching in good order right through the village towards the residence of the magistrate.

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CHAPTER VII.

DISSATISFACTION.

WHILE these strange scenes were enacting at the workhouse, Giles Solley pursued his way homewards, with a mind only partially withdrawn from the pressure of private cares by a consideration of the probable consequences to the parish from Mr. Amos's obstinacy. For his brother had not kept the appointment which had been made for the previous day, and Giles naturally concluded that the marriage, which it was his object to prevent, would go forward. That idea again brought with it the prospect of increasing annoyance from day to day,—of a colony of disreputable connexions springing up about him, which he could neither notice nor get rid of. It may be that Giles's residence abroad, even at the court of an African chief, had sharpened his feelings as to points

about which few men in his station give themselves the smallest concern; or perhaps nature had endowed him with a morbid sensibility, which the pride of an honourable descent tended to increase. At all events, whatever the cause might be, as to the effect no doubt could exist. Giles would not countenance a brother who had brought upon his family the disgrace to which Dick's misdeeds had exposed his own; yet he fretted himself to death lest the very brother whom he had cast off might marry a woman of bad character and settle near him.

Such was the bent of Giles's meditations, when a loud shout, rising as it seemed from the vicinity of the workhouse, caused him to look back. He had gained the summit of a little eminence along the brow of which ran a hedge, and, standing near a gate, was enabled to take in a large extent of country. He saw the men, to the number perhaps of sixty, hurrying towards the village; and, fearing he scarce knew what, was on the eve of returning, when some one overleaping the gate, rubbed shoulders with him. He turned round, and beheld his brother Dick, evidently as little pleased with

the rencounter as he seemed prepared for it; for Dick's dress was that of a man who had been up all night, and engaged in some laborious employment. His gaberdine was wet; his shoes and leggings were muddy; and he carried over his left shoulder a bag of which the contents seemed bulky, and his right hand grasped a formidable-looking bludgeon. The brothers stared at one another without speaking; and the younger made a movement as if to proceed, when Giles detained him.

"I expected you all yesterday," said he, "but you never came. Is it that you have determined to reject my proposal, or what else am I to understand?"

"Whatever you please, brother," replied Dick, resting his burthen on the gate, "except that I have no particular fancy for going to America."

"And you *have* a particular fancy for taking to wife the most abandoned woman in the parish."

"That's my own concern, Giles."

"Dick," said Giles, somewhat softened without knowing why, "it is impossible that you can have any love for that woman; and I pray

you to consider whether you will better your condition by linking your fate with one whom neither your mother nor I can ever notice."

"I do not expect to better my condition," replied Dick bitterly: "I believe, indeed, that nothing could make it worse; but as to bettering it, that is quite out of the question. No, I don't marry for love; but you yourself know that it has come to this,—a man must either marry or starve."

"Indeed, brother, I know nothing of the sort. On the contrary, you will find, when you reach the street, that the fact of being married will no longer entitle you, or anybody else, to increased parish-pay. Do you see that crowd of people there?—these are the men from the farm, all of them married, but all cut down in their pay, this very morning, from twelve shillings to nine. Whether do you think that you will be best off with six shillings as a single man, or with nine as a married man?"

"But you forget, brother, my bonny bride has a little fortune of her own. Five shillings a week is some help to a man in these bad times."

"With two children to keep out of it. By heavens! Dick, the levity with which you speak of

marrying the mother of two such children sometimes makes me doubt whether the same blood flows in your veins that runs through mine."

"You must ask our mother that question, Giles," was the reply. "In the mean while, as I am in a hurry, and want to know what all that hullabaloo is about, I must wish you good morning."

"Stay one moment, Dick. I would fain save you from taking a step which you will never cease to repent; I would fain put you in a way of redeeming your character, if that be possible; and could I see a chance for you here, even here I would establish you. But you know your own weakness; you know that you have no more power to withdraw from bad associates, or to deliver yourself from bondage under one cunning knave or another, than you have the power to work a miracle. Would it not be prudent, therefore, to try your fortune elsewhere? I recommended America because it is a new country, and report speaks favourably of men's chances there; but if you dislike going so far, why not go to sea? I had a short trial of the life, and I assure you that it is a pleasant one; or if all

other resources fail, try to be to me what you once were, and I will act fairly by you to the best of my ability."

"I have no fancy for the sea, Giles; and if I had, I am too old to learn a seaman's duties: and as to your last proposal, it comes too late."

"Have you made up your mind to be cast off entirely, with your wife and your amiable step-children, both by your mother and me?"

"Giles," said Dick bitterly, "there is no use in throwing out such a threat as that. What am I now? Is the countenance which I receive from you of the smallest use to me? Can I so much as go to Crackstakes for a day's work when I want one, without first of all petitioning my own flesh and blood as I would a stranger? Is my seat, my old familiar seat by the fire, kept vacant for me, or my bed in the garret made up as it once was? I am cast off already; and what worse will my condition be after than it was before my marriage?"

"There are two ways of telling every story, Dick," was Giles's answer, delivered in a sterner tone. "It was not I that cast you off; it was you that rendered yourself unworthy of

the treatment of a brother at my hands. One who by his extravagance ruined himself,—who robbed his mother and brought her and her little ones to the workhouse,—has no great right to reproach his brother if he refuse to take him under his roof: you may thank the connexion that is between us for saving you from transportation at the least.”

“Then let me go my own way, and do you take yours,” replied Dick, with difficulty suppressing his fury: “we have wasted too much time already in this useless chat. You would not transport me by due course of law,—oh no!—because that might reflect disgrace upon yourself; but you would be extremely happy if I could be persuaded to transport myself. D—n it, Giles, there is no vice, after all, so mean as hypocrisy; and with that, at least, no man can charge me.”

Dick flung his sack over his shoulder, grasped his cudgel tightly, and moved forward. Giles seemed to hesitate for a moment, but immediately afterwards made up his mind. He allowed his brother to pass on; and in a few seconds each was considerably advanced in an opposite direction from that pursued by the other.

While the elder brother pursued his way homewards, scarcely satisfied with himself, and full of indignation towards Dick, the younger, maddened by what he taught himself to regard as the ungenerous conduct of his nearest of kin, ran, rather than walked, with troubled strides in the direction of the street. He saw the crowd when he gained a particular angle, just as its rear was passing the mill-dam; and the shout with which the people seemed to take leave of the villagers inflamed him with a strong desire to join them. It was, however, necessary, first of all, to get rid of his burthen; so he hastened to Marshall's, and, entering by the back-door, cast down the load on a table in the washhouse. He then shouted for Marshall, who, having a customer to serve, could not immediately attend, but who joined him as soon as possible.

"You seem in haste, Dick," said he; "what may you be after now? can't you wait a bit and tell me how it fared last night?"

"Not now," answered Dick; "I'll be back again by-and-by: the men are all marching Lord knows where, and I want to join them."

"Pooh! is that all? Then take my advice and stay at home. They are off about

a matter with which you have no concern, and in which, if you take my advice, you won't mix yourself up. I venture to prophesy that they will return just as they went; and then we shall be able to make use of them for our own purposes."

"What is it that they are about, then?"

"Oh! only going to Colonel Hamilton's to seek redress against Amos. He has lowered their pay, it seems; and the simple fools imagine that the magistrate will interfere to increase the expenses of the tenantry. They will find out their mistake ere long, that you may depend upon."

"Hang it, I should like to be of the party too. There is something in the shout of men that always raises one's spirits, and makes one forget one's cares: I think I must go too."

"You must not, Dick. Be content where you are. Why should you be anxious to make yourself a marked man, when there is no occasion for it?—and why should your cares press more upon you to-day than yesterday?"

"I have just parted from that sweet brother of mine, and we have had a breeze. D—nation! it makes me mad to think that

he *has* a right to throw such things in my teeth, and that I cannot give as well as take."

"Oh! that's it, is it? Well, well, never mind; rather be thankful that he cannot now go further. In the mean time, how did matters go last night? Was the look-out good? You succeeded, I perceive? But was there no skirmishing?"

"None whatever. A little trouble managed all; but there was no appearance of danger."

"Bring the bag up stairs, then. I am just going to dinner—stay and take some with me; and by the time we are done, the people will be back from Hamilton's, and then we shall know how they sped."

Dick yielded to the reasoning of his friend, and they adjourned to dinner. It is not at the noon-day meal that persons in the humbler classes of society ever commit an excess; neither were Marshall and his guest tempted, on the present occasion, to forget themselves. The former indeed was constitutionally a temperate man, and the latter found no inducement to behave intemperately; nevertheless, they lingered at table long enough to effect Marshall's purposes, inasmuch as the noise of many feet and a hubbub of voices beneath the window

assured them, before the meal was finished, that the paupers were returned. Dick sprang from his seat and looked out. There they were, sure enough, not now advancing in regular column with measured tread and an air of defiance, but straggling and disorderly, as men are wont to be who have sustained some defeat, and are as much exasperated as discouraged by it. Dick did not linger long at the window ; but, running down stairs, was soon in the heart of the throng. The first whom he addressed was a man remarkable throughout the parish for his great industry and determined temper.

“ What has happened, Wall ? ” cried Dick.

“ Happened ! Nothing but what we had a right to expect. The gentlemen are all linked together to oppress us poor men ; and it has come to the point where I all along thought it would end : we must either take care of ourselves, or see our wives and children perish.”

The sound of Wall’s voice, which had not been heard during the whole of their progress homeward, drew towards him and Dick Solley half-a-dozen of the most resolute of the crowd. They surrounded the querist ; and, happy in the opportunity of making their case known to one who seemed to be in ignorance, they began

with excessive volubility to instruct him. Meanwhile Mr. Marshall, as if attracted by mere motives of curiosity, came and stood at his shop-door, without, however, appearing anxious either to provoke discussion, or to deliver any opinion of his own. "We went, you see," exclaimed several speakers at once, "to Hamilton's, though Wall told us from the first that we should get no redress. Well, up we goes to the hall-door, and rings the bell. A servant opens, and we desires to see his master. Next comes the Colonel himself; and he says, says he, 'What's all this about, men? what do you want coming in such a body to my door? This is a downright riot: I can't suffer a mob to collect here; but if any of you have a complaint to make about anything, let him come into my justice-room, and I will hear him.'

"'We have all a complaint to make,' answered Wall; 'and if your worship pleases, we should like to make it where we stand. The overseer has robbed us all, and we want redress.'

"'How robbed you, my man?' says the Colonel.

"'By lowering our pay,' says Wall. 'We've been working on the parish farm ever since last

Thursday; and when we came to receive our twelve shillings, he offered us only nine.'

"What have you earned?' asks the Colonel; 'what was your week's work worth?'

"I know nothing about that,' says Wall; 'I only know that we have never got less nor twelve shillings before, and now we're cut down to nine.'

"And have you taken the nine?' says he. 'No, to be sure not,' says Wall. 'What use would nine shillings be to me, with a wife and seven children?'

"There you were wrong, my man,' says the Colonel. 'If you be paupers on parish pay, you ought to have taken whatever the overseer offered; and if that was not enough, then you might have come and asked an order for further relief. But I can't interfere to regulate the amount of wages in a parish: you must go back and take the nine shillings, if you can now get them; and then, if any one of you think himself aggrieved, let him return to me: but observe, I will hold no communication with a disorderly mob.'

"And is this all we've got by way of redress?' says Wall.

"All that you shall get from me, at any

rate,' says Hamilton. 'Whatever may be the real merits of your case, you have put yourselves in the wrong by your mode of bringing it forward.'

"'You are all alike,' says Wall,—for he spoke up to the justice like a man;—'there's not one among you that cares whether a poor man live or die. I for one will never take the nine shillings—I will sooner starve first; and if my neighbours follow my advice, they will do so likewise.'

"'Look you, friend,' says the Colonel, 'I advise you to mind what you are about. You have acted as spokesman on the present occasion, for which no harm shall befall you; but the tone in which you are pleased to address your comrades cannot be forgotten: I recommend you to take care of yourself. And you, my lads, go back and take the wages that are offered: at present I can give you no better advice.'

"'Now then, friends,' says Wall, turning round and speaking to us, 'hear me:—The man that forgets himself so far as to cringe to Amos for his paltry nine shillings, is a mean, spiritless slave; he does not deserve that we should hold any conversation with him, and I, for one, declare

that I will never speak to him again. But for the rest, I tell them, that if they be only true to themselves and to one another, we may see this matter out yet."

"Lord! if you had heard the shout we gave! It was no use the Colonel trying to speak again; we would not listen to him; but, after giving him three groans, away we marched homeward; and here we are now, ready to follow Wall wherever he chooses to lead, and up to anything."

"There's Mr. Marshall," interposed Wall at this stage of the conversation: "he's the poor man's friend; let us consult with him."

"Really," replied Marshall, "I do not know what to say: your case is the cruellest I ever heard of,—hang me if it isn't! Oppressed by the overseer; deserted by the magistrate; refused work, which is all done by machinery; and sent home, cold and hungry, to your starving families;—it's enough to rouse you into any enterprise. However, it's no use consulting while your blood is hot. Come you, Wall, by-and-by, to the Anchor, when we can consider the case leisurely; and get rid of the men as soon as possible: half of them are not to be trusted, you may rely upon it; and if

they were, they are too numerous. You and Dick and I will talk this matter over, and see what may be done."

Mr. Marshall's proposition received the approval of the parties to whom he addressed himself; so Wall retired home sulky and desponding, and the others betook themselves, some to one public-house, and some to another.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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THE CHRONICLES OF WALTHAM. 216

THE
CHRONICLES OF WALTHAM.

VOL. II.



THE HISTORY OF THE

LONDON:
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Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

THE
CHRONICLES OF WALTHAM.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "THE SUBALTERN,"
"THE COUNTRY CURATE," &c.

Man is dear to man, the poorest poor
Long for some moments in a weary life
When they can know and feel that they have been
Themselves the fathers, and the dealers out
Of some small blessings; have been kind to such
As needed kindness, for this single cause,
That we have all of us one human heart.

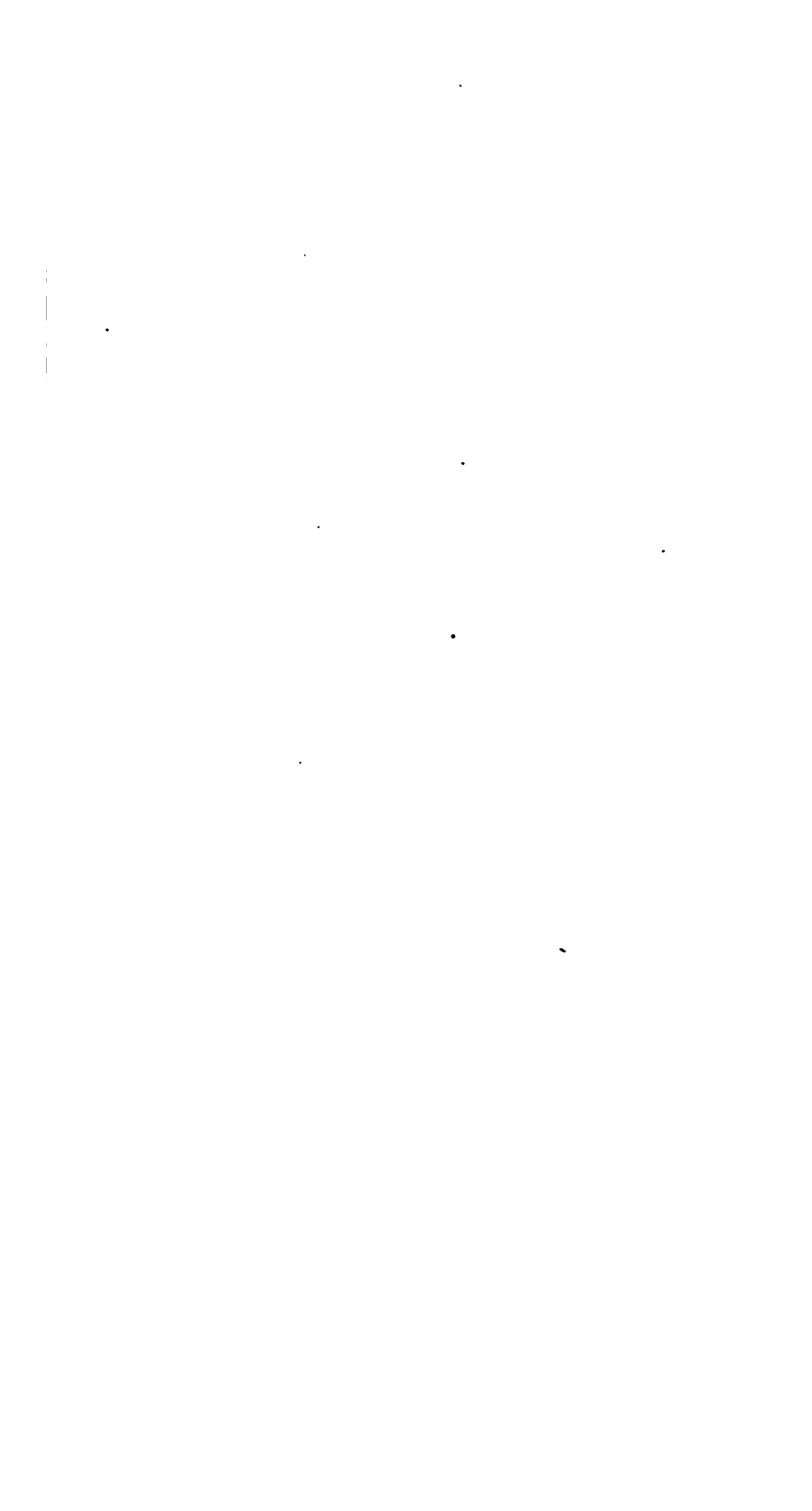
WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

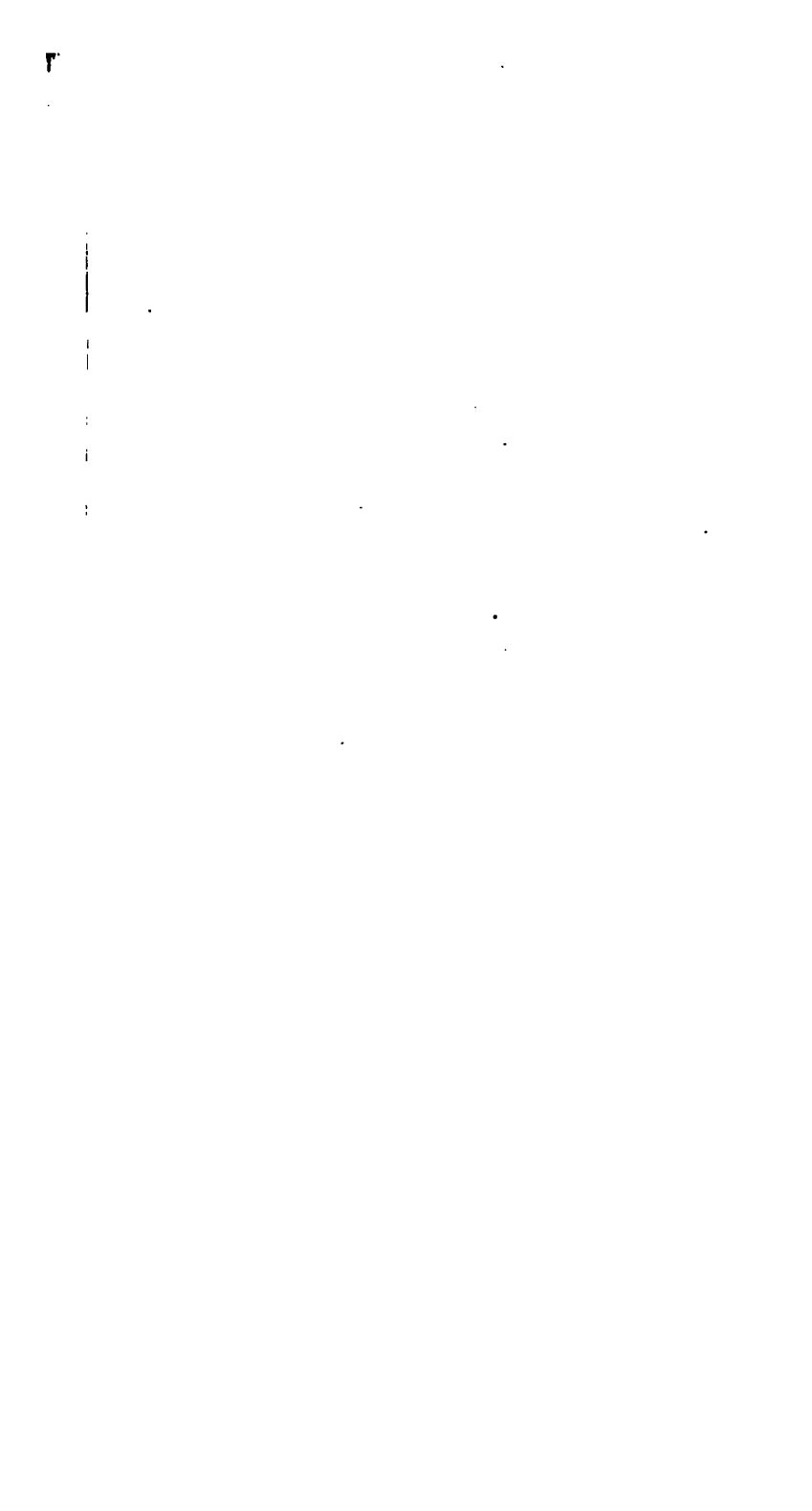
LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1835.



THE VILLAGE ORACLE.

(CONTINUED.)



THE VILLAGE ORACLE.

(CONTINUED.)

1. *What is the purpose of this study?*

1

THE VILLAGE ORACLE.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CALAMITY.

DURING the remainder of that day such scenes were witnessed in Waltham as had not come previously under the notice of any of its inhabitants. Everywhere the fields were deserted, while the public-houses swarmed with men whose language became more and more violent in proportion as the liquor took effect; with which, strange to say, the landlords did not scruple to supply them. I state this fact as a curious one, because there was scarce an individual in any of the tap-rooms throughout the place who could boast of having sixpence in his purse; yet all drank their beer copiously, and drank on credit. Meanwhile the farmers met in groups, lamented the turn which affairs had taken, blamed the harshness of the overseer, yet shrunk back from the responsibility of

acting in opposition to him. The overseer, on the contrary, appeared to delight in the storm which he could not deny that he had raised.

"Is it not much better to see the thing out at once," said he, "than to be living in constant hot water? Let them do their worst: they threatened me, not you; let them try to accomplish their threats, and see what will come of it. My double-barrel is ready charged for their benefit, and curse me if the very first that lays his hand on my machine shan't have the contents of it!"

It was to no purpose that his neighbours warned him how hopeless would be the resistance of one man against a hundred: Mr. Amos seemed to have screwed his courage to the sticking-place, and walked away with a deliberate step, avowing his resolution to meet like a man whatever fortune might bring upon him.

With all his courage—and it was great—Mr. Amos judged it prudent that night to take some precautions against surprise. He caused the gates of his yard to be locked as soon as it grew dark; and putting fresh caps on the nipples of his fowling-piece, placed it in the corner of the parlour. A brace of pistols were likewise loaded, and a sword-stick of a very efficient description was laid where it might easily be

got at. All these weapons Mr. Amos designed for his own use; because, in the first place, he kept no male servant as an inmate; and, if the contrary had been the case, he believed that such was not to be trusted. Then, ordering his family to retire early to bed, he extinguished the candles, and sat till long after midnight, wrapped up in a cloak, over the embers of a low fire.

Nothing occurred, however, to alarm him. Once or twice, indeed, the shout of a drunken man, and the tread of persons traversing the road in front of the house, roused him, and he grasped his gun, without a pulse beating the quicker for the movement. But the sounds died away without giving place to others, and his vigilance gradually relaxed. At last he fell asleep in his chair, and woke again only when the stir of his people made him look up, that he might see everything, both within and without, in the very same order in which he had left it over-night.

Meanwhile Mr. Marshall, Dick Solley, and Wall had met, as was agreed upon, at the Anchor. For an hour or so they occupied their accustomed places in the club-room, where, instead of the usual reading of a newspaper, the events of the past day gave full oc-

however, come to inflame
was effected already, but
Taking advantage, therefore
which rendered those around
of passing events, they with
an opportunity offered.

“Let us go to the ‘Good
said Marshall; “it is some

Thither they accordingly
provided with a little party
they remained there in clo
clave till long after the short
ing had set in. To what
council no one except the
privy; for their door was be
versed in so low a tone, that
though she applied her ear
failed to ascertain the subject
But that the matters discus
import could not be deter

When the morning came, and the effects of their potations were worn off, and they beheld their wives out of humour, and heard their children clamouring for bread, the resolution of a large number of the labouring people gave way. One by one they repaired to the overseer's dwelling, and petitioned for the reduced pay which they had recently spurned. But Mr. Amos was not the sort of person to triumph by halves: he now refused to give even the nine shillings, on the ground, that, as they had already rejected it, they had no longer a legal claim; but he offered them eight, which a few consented to accept. The remainder, however, became furious.

"What's the use of starving any longer?" cried they: "better lie down and die at once, than thus be killed by inches."

Among those who struck their colours Wall was not one. He neither repaired to Mr. Amos's house, nor made a movement in search of work; but took his station in the middle of the street, opposite to the Anchor, where he was soon joined by Dick Solley. The two walking backwards and forwards, conversed earnestly, both their countenances indicating a fierce and determined resolution; while apart from them stood several other small groups, composed en-

tirely of the more resolute of the malcontents who had not consented to the overseer's terms.

"What can be done with chicken-hearted white-livers like these?" said Dick. "There they are off in a body to confess their fault, and beg forgiveness! If you, or I, or any other man made an attempt to serve them, as you recommended, they would take the very first opportunity of saving themselves by giving us up to justice."

"Oh, curse them indeed!" answered Wall; "a poor, pitiful, beggarly, spiritless set of wretches! One could do more with a parcel of women than with cowards like these, who cannot put up with a week's suffering, were a life of comfort to be purchased by it."

"Are you then prepared to give in at once?" asked Dick.

"I," replied Wall—"I give in! No, never! If I can find but three men to back me, I'll begin the thing alone, and take all the consequences, be they what they may."

"With three men, Wall, you could do nothing. It is only by numbers that we can prevail at all; and therefore, unless we can command people enough to strike terror at the outset, the thing had much better be left alone. Why not follow Marshall's advice?"

"Look you, Dick Solley," answered Wall, "I think there is no man in the parish that has more right to complain than I; yet d—n me if I can bring myself to such a deed as that. No; whatever I do must be done openly and like a man: I am for none of your midnight work; it's not English—it's unworthy of a man."

"Well, well, do as you please; but you may depend upon this——"

"See—what are these fellows about?" interrupted Wall, as ten or twelve men came swinging up the street, talking loudly, and gesticulating with great vehemence. Dick turned in the direction pointed out, and had scarcely done so, when both he and his companion were recognised: the men ran towards them, and in a moment all was explained.

"Would you believe it, Wall? the brute won't give us the nine shillings now. We offered to take his paltry pay and go to work again, and what do you think he did?—he offered us eight!"

"And why did you not accept it?" asked Wall, coolly.

"What! accept eight shillings! Can you ask such a question, Wall? We would see him d—d first!"

"That's strange, too," replied Wall, in the same tone: "there does not seem to me so great a difference between nine shillings and eight, as between twelve shillings and nine. If, after refusing to take less than twelve, you make up your minds to take nine, I think you acted very foolishly to refuse the eight."

"What good would eight shillings do us? Besides, when we agreed to take that, the chances are, he would offer seven, and six, and so on, till he got us ground down to work for nothing. Better rob on the highway, or die at once, than put up with such treatment."

"Now listen, men," exclaimed Wall, raising his hand and speaking with an elevated voice,—"listen to me. If you had stuck to the promises which you freely gave last night, this mortification would have been spared you. Yet I am not sorry that you have suffered it: at least, it may teach you that no terms are to be kept with such as Amos; and that, if you ever hope to obtain redress, you must seek it in a proper manner, and win it with your own hands. Mind, when I say this, I am not an advocate for doing any man a secret injury. Set my enemy in my front, and I will know how to deal with him; but I could not stab him in the dark, and neither will I creep like a

coward under cloud of night to do him wrong. What I say is this: — Are we not more in numbers by far than those that oppress us? Are not our arms stronger? is not our courage as high? What is there to hinder us from showing them that we are both as able and willing to make laws for them as they have been to make laws for us? Will you follow if I lead?"

Wall had been repeatedly interrupted by the shouts of his auditors while delivering this short address, and he was answered at its close by a universal "Yes." It seemed, indeed, as if there needed but a movement on his part to carry the excited men around him against the overseer. But ere any plan of operations could be arranged, or an indication made of his intentions, Mr. Marshall presented himself. He had been appealed to by several of the farmers, who, witnessing the assemblage of people, and dreading some immediate explosion, entreated him to interfere in the restoration of order; and he now ran forward bare-headed, with the view of pouring oil upon the waters.

Wall expressed unmitigated contempt for the soothing and artful harangue with which the passions of the people were assailed; yet so fickle is the multitude, that he spoke in vain.

Marshall was now the favourite. The latter promised that he would use his best endeavours to obtain for them redress. He besought them not to put him in so unfavourable a position as he must occupy after any act of violence had been perpetrated, but to wait patiently at least another day before they adopted rash measures. He too was answered with cheers, and one by one the men began to drop off.

"You have done it now, Marshall," said Wall sternly, when he and Dick and the grocer had been left alone; "you have effectually damaged all my schemes, and must now invent plans of your own. As for me, I and my children may starve; but neither will I work for half wages, nor shall this hand of mine be concerned in a deed of which my heart disapproves."

"Keep yourself quiet, friend," answered Marshall: "your time will come by-and-by. I have done you the best service in hindering you from knocking your head against a wall, as you certainly would have done had you attempted anything to-day. It will be time enough for you to act after all things shall have been prepared."

So saying, the three separated; Wall wending his way sullenly and slowly towards his

comfortless home, Dick betaking himself to the Good Intent, and Marshall returning to receive the thanks of the occupiers, and to prosecute his own business behind the counter.

Nor were the farmers themselves long kept from their accustomed operations by the threatening aspect of affairs in the morning. This was market-day in the neighbouring town, and neither in the corn-exchange, nor at the ordinary which followed, were there any agriculturists more cheerful than those that came from Waltham. Amos was somewhat too harsh, certainly; yet he had done the thing well. The people were completely humbled, and therefore they might afford to treat them a little better by-and-by, in the confident assurance that no undue advantage would be taken of it.

It was dark when Mr. Amos mounted his horse,—for on market-days he still wore a blue coat, one of the last of a stock laid in five years before, and he still rode, though not the sort of animal which five years before he had been accustomed to ride. He had been tempted to commit an excess that day, and was consequently in high spirits, when he, Mr. Rigden, Mr. Sankey, and another, set out at a brisk trot from the inn yard. The church-bell tolled

fire is not in our parish. I don't think it is. See, it lies away to the north; it is on the other side of the river."

"Then what should my bailiff do riding in this direction for an engine?" demanded Mr. Amos.

"Gentlemen," cried the fourth, who had not spoken a word since the far-off glare had become visible, "we are only wasting time by discussing that point here. Let us get forward, and wherever it may be, let us give all the assistance in our power."

Again they pressed their animals to a gallop, and as each bound of the horses brought them nearer and nearer to the scene of action, their uncertainty respecting the site of the fire increased.

"It is beyond Waltham parish far!" exclaimed one voice.

"No; it is on this side of it," retorted another.

"I am afraid it is in the parish," cried a third.

But their doubts were not now destined to be of long continuance. They approached the village; they gained the bridge, where some women with children were lounging.

"Where is the fire?" shouted the horsemen.

"Oh! just where it ought to be," was the reply—"down at Amos's. Ay, ride, ride—but ye won't put it out!"

They did ride, for Mr. Amos's farm lay a full mile from the street. As they traversed the lane, the brilliancy of the scene became more striking every instant. Now the outlines of the leafless trees that intervened between them and the premises were distinctly visible;—now the dwelling-house, which lay on the near side of the stack-yard, stood forth as at mid-day;—now, behind it, lumps of dark matter, from the sides and faces of which volumes of flame were bursting out, showed themselves in horrid relief against the dark outline of the horizon;—and, last of all, crowds of people were seen moving hither and thither amid the masses, like savages dancing round the fires amid which they sacrifice their human victims. All these sights, with the roar of the ascending flames, rendered terribly audible in the stillness of a calm night, stirred up in the bosoms of those who approached the scene feelings that might not easily be described.

"You were right, gentlemen," said Amos, in the tone of one who is thoroughly subdued; "the odds against me were fearful, and I am beaten."

CHAPTER IX.

A MORAL FEVER.

WHEN they reached the scene of this terrible catastrophe, Mr. Amos and his friends found that a large barn full of grain, six stacks of wheat, one or two of fodder, a whole line of lodges and stables, with an outhouse and a dove-cot besides, were all in flames. How the fire originated nobody could tell, except that it was first discovered in the barn, a slit or loop-hole in the gable of which looked out upon the lane, just within reach of a man's hand whose stature was not diminutive. Neither was the time ascertained with any accuracy. The farm-servants all declared, that when they quitted the stables at eight o'clock everything was safe, and that they had not been gone half an hour when the cry of fire alarmed them. A cottager who lived nearly opposite to the farmhouse had been the first to give the alarm; and the conflagration spread so rapidly,

that long before any steps could be taken to arrest its progress, the possibility of doing so had ceased.

The remarks of the women as they passed the bridge had not been such as to create in Mr. Amos, and those who accompanied him, any anticipation of zeal and alacrity among the crowd. In this, however, their own fears had deceived them: for, whether it was that each man was anxious to clear himself of being suspected as a party concerned, or whether the better feelings of human nature at the moment obtained a mastery over their opposites—or, lastly, whether they were at all affected by the manifest humiliation of the sufferer, who went about among them pale, stupified, and, as it seemed, powerless even of speech; whatever the motive might be that had weight with them, no body of people ever exhibited a better spirit than was displayed by the labouring men that attended the fire. Regardless of personal danger, they applied themselves, some to hinder the fire from extending to the dwelling-house, others to loosen the horses and cattle from their stalls and to turn them out into the orchard. Meanwhile a third party, having provided buckets, laboured to open a way through the flames to the barn-floor, on which a consider-

the quinnry of half-dressed grain lay ready for winnowing. As to stopping the destruction with which the stacks were threatened, that, in the absence of a fire-engine, was out of the question; nevertheless, the people put everything in train for working with effect so soon as the means of working should arrive. They collected buckets from every house in the parish; they stationed themselves in double lines between a couple of ponds and the positions in which the engines were intended to be placed; while four or five, by beating with long poles those sides of the burning ricks which adjoined to others not yet ignited, strove to hinder the flames from the one from communicating with the other. And then the universal cessation of human voices was very striking. No one spoke, but, turning their faces towards the fire, all gazed upon it; while the only sound discernible was the rushing of the flames, and the crackling of the corn-stacks from which they ascended.

Such was the mode in which half an hour was spent; Mr. Atmos moving all the while amid his blazing property like one that walks in his sleep. If spoken to, he answered—but it was instinctively; neither did he seem capable of issuing a single order, or giving a

single direction. He had passed to the rearward of the stack-yard, and was standing in the gloom, when a stealthy step carried some one near him, and a voice spoke in a whisper—"What can your double-barrel do now?" He turned round—saw a light-coloured shooting-jacket—made a grasp at it, but missed; and before he could move from the spot on which he stood, it was gone. "That's the fellow that did it," exclaimed he, restored, as it seemed, immediately to the command of his faculties. "I'll hunt the world over but I'll find him." And he did hunt here, and there, and everywhere. He was now all animation and spirit. He spoke kindly to one man, encouragingly to another; peered into every face, closely examined every coat, but effected no discovery. "This is hard, d——d hard!" he at length said to Marshall, who arrived somewhat tardily at the spot, and wore his usual garb, a brown frock. "I know the scoundrel that did it is about, and I cannot for the life of me detect him."

"Think of saving what you can of the property first, Mr. Amos," replied the grocer; "and, hark! in good time, I hear the engines."

Marshall was right. The lumbering of heavy wheels, driven with great rapidity, caught the

Mr. Amos from their exertions. Property to the amount of several thousand pounds had perished; and as, among other strange freaks, he had always argued in favour of the policy of each man being an insurer to himself, there was no public body to which he could look for making good even a portion of it. No wonder that he should have been dejected: for some time he had found it a hard matter to make, as he expressed himself, the two ends of the year meet; because there still hung over him liabilities which he had incurred in the prosperous times; and in the education of his family, though born under circumstances of great discredit, he never grudged expense. When, therefore, he beheld the entire produce of his farm, including a large portion of the last tithe crop which he was destined to gather in, consumed before his eyes, even his dogged firmness gave way: he withdrew into an inner chamber, and wept like a child.

It was not, however, upon Mr. Amos alone that the fire seemed to have produced a powerful effect: into all ranks and orders of persons a kind of panic was infused, which they found it as difficult to account for as to shake off. The labouring people anticipated, and not without justice, that a course of inquiries,

harassing to many of them, would be instituted into the origin of the calamity; while the farmers admitted one to another that no man was safe. The country gentlemen likewise took the alarm; there were meetings of magistrates held; there were rewards offered for the apprehension of the incendiary. First one, and then another suspected person was taken up; officers came down from Bow-street; and if there was a lack of success in the measures adopted, at all events there was no deficiency of zeal in carrying them forward. But every investigation terminated in disappointment; against no individual could grounds even of strong suspicion be discovered, till at last inquiry ceased altogether. Yet the spirit in which the fire was believed to have originated did not cease: on the contrary, it spread over different parts of the country like a contagious disease, till, within one short week, not a night passed over without the light of fires being seen, either near or far off, towards every point of the compass.

While the neighbouring parishes were thus subject to daily and nightly alarms — alarms which were the more harassing that they appeared to defy all measures of precaution and prevention,—in Waltham the same sulky and

dissatisfied spirit prevailed that had operated both among employers and employed since the last meeting of the committee. The labouring people neither sought employment nor petitioned for the wages that were due; while the overseer, either hardened by the misfortune to which he had recently been subjected, or too busy to attend to their wants, gave himself no trouble to look after them. It was remarked, moreover, that Mr. Amos made no movement to recompense the people who had worked at his fire, nor yet to repay the publicans for the refreshments that had been supplied. Still, those who thought at all could not but acknowledge that, for a man labouring under the calamity which had overtaken Mr. Amos, every allowance ought to be made. As if fate itself, however, had determined that the tempers of the peasantry should be tried to the uttermost, there occurred, on the Saturday night following, a large fire in the neighbouring parish, whither a considerable proportion of the men of Waltham repaired, and where all were said not to have behaved with perfect propriety. Nevertheless, some did their duty well; and as the whole affair was over by five o'clock on the Sunday morning, the curate naturally expected that, when the hour of

divine service returned, he would find his accustomed congregation in their places, and all not less attentive than they were wont to be to the ordinances of the church.

The curate was entirely deceived in this expectation. In the country parishes of Kent it is not much the custom, under any circumstances, to gather together a full congregation in the forenoon. Men who have devoted a whole week to labour, rising up early, if they do not go to bed late, are too apt to imagine that the former portion of the Lord's day may be spent in personal indulgence; and hence very few quit their beds in sufficient time to be present at morning prayer. In like manner the women, taking perhaps undue care of the body, spend the Sunday morning in making ready their dinner against noon. The church is thus but slenderly attended, not even the inducement of a sermon drawing many persons together. Though, therefore, the curate was a little struck with the more than common paucity of attendance, he read the liturgy that forenoon without much misgiving; but when, on passing from the church to the school after service, he beheld the labouring people gathered in groups about the street, their heads held closely together, and an expression of anxiety

and excitement in their countenances, an indescribable apprehension, he knew not of what, came over him. He stopped and addressed one small band, in the centre of which stood Wall.

"I suppose you were at the fire last night, Wall?" said he. "Indeed, I heard that a great many men from this parish were there, and that they did their duty. Yet I think you would have been as well employed at church, as wasting your morning in idle chat in the street."

"I was not at the fire, sir," replied Wall, with his customary mixture of civility and independence. "I never gave my voice for so unmanly a method of righting the poor man's wrongs; but I never will lend my aid to extinguish fires which the oppressed have lighted."

"It strikes me, Wall," said the curate, "that if you were to soften your manner a little, you would not suffer by it. There is no use in setting yourself in array against your superiors. I know you to be an honest and a hard-working man; but others, who have seen less of you, will be apt to imagine that you are willing to dare anything."

"And they won't be far wrong, sir—that you

may depend upon," answered Wall. "However, we have no fault to find with you; I wish to God all the gentlemen were like you;—but these are bad times, sir, both for rich and poor, as will be seen by-and-by."

The curate passed on, for he did not care to involve himself in a discussion with a man of Wall's habits; but had not gone far ere he arrived at another group, in the centre of which stood Dick Solley.

"Your father would not have absented himself from prayers this morning, Richard," said he, stopping; "and I am at a loss to conceive any good reason why his son should have done so."

"Nor can I give you one, sir," answered Dick, touching his hat respectfully; "unless it be that business of a very peculiar nature kept him away. I was at the fire all night, and have not yet had time to shift myself."

"Perhaps so, Richard; but in that case I am afraid you did not go straight home from the scene of your commendable exertions."

Dick blushed, and the curate, unwilling to press him too hard, proceeded on his way. He listened to the children as they read and said their catechisms, but scarcely gave his

attention to the subject ; and when he returned to the church, I cannot say that he was surprised to find it unusually thin. Now such an occurrence is rare in the country parishes of Kent. Generally speaking, few dissenters prevail there ; and whatever may be the case in the forenoon, the service of the afternoon is almost always well attended. Mr. Jacobson, therefore, guessed that all was not right with his people, seeing that so few came to take their parts in the performance of public worship. Besides, when the service was ended, he was not slow in ascertaining that the assembling themselves together, of which he had taken notice in the earlier part of the day, had not ceased even during church-time ; and when, over and above all this, it came to his knowledge that the tap-rooms were filled, and the publicans busy till a late hour in the night, his heart altogether misgave him.

“ God knows what the result may be,” said he to his wife, as they sat together after family worship, preparatory to retiring to rest. “ I have long seen that a bad spirit was abroad among the people, and Will Watts has confirmed these suspicions by the reports he has brought me. That fire at Amos’s was a shocking

thing, of which I wish that I had positive proof that none of my own parishioners have been the authors. But to-day their conduct is altogether incomprehensible : they have not only kept away from church, but they avoid me as if I were their enemy. I am very much deceived if we shan't hear of this ere long : and Wall, industrious as he is, seems to be at the bottom of it. What a pity that man's spirit should be so proud ! Then there is Dick Solley. A sad blot upon the scutcheon of his race that young man's career has been ; and yet I would not like to stake my credit on his not disgracing it even more. However, the future is in the hands of Him who has regulated the past ; and if these misguided men do anything that is wrong, they, not we, will suffer. I wish they would learn to submit themselves to the necessities of their situation."

" Yes, my dear," replied his wife ; " and I wish also they had a better overseer than Mr. Amos."

" Very likely," answered the curate ; " perhaps I wish so too : but it is not exactly the time to discuss the qualities of the captain when his crew are in a state of mutiny. However, as you and I can't mend matters, we had best

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the foremost place; but our weapons must be reason, and an appeal to the men's better feelings."

"I am quite ready to act as you desire, sir," replied Giles; "only I do think, that if these people, whether with or without reason, be permitted to throw the whole neighbourhood into alarm in the open day, there is an end to all order and to the authority of the law for ever."

"That may be, Giles," said the curate; "but where there is such an evident want of courage among the persons who ought to enforce their own authority, it would be idle in you and me to wage war with a multitude. If, indeed, argument does not prevail, then we may try something else; but I hope that it may prevail."

They had by this time gained the bottom of the lane, just where it struck off in two branches to the right and left, when, looking down the latter, they beheld, about a couple of hundred yards off, the formidable array of insurgents advancing towards them. For the movement of a purely irregular crowd, nothing could be more imposing. First came two men, each armed with a huge bludgeon. About twenty paces in rear of these were eight more carrying pickaxes and sledge-hammers. Another interval

of twenty or thirty yards intervened, which was closed up by the main body, amounting in all to somewhere about a hundred; very many of whom, however, carried no weapons, while the remainder brandished hop-poles, with here and there a bill-hook and a hammer. Last of all came a rear-guard of six or eight men, at the same distance from the main body as that by which it was separated from the advanced guard: all of these bore spades, or axes, with a couple of pruning-knives, of which the appearance was exceedingly formidable.

"I think, Giles," observed Mr. Jacobson, "that you had much better halt where you are. Possibly your brother may be in that crowd; and if so, you would not like to be placed in the disagreeable situation either of bearing witness against him, or of acting partially in such a case: and were it not so, I am sure that I can do more alone than even with you at my side. If I want your help, depend upon it I will make a signal."

Giles consented on these conditions to pull up, while Mr. Jacobson rode forward: his coming was evidently not agreeable to the two men in front.

"What!" exclaimed he, "you, Wall—you and Richard Solley? I can scarcely believe my

eyes! You are the last men in the place—and especially you, Wall — whom I should have expected to see in such a situation.”

“That may be, sir,” replied Wall, civilly yet doggedly, and without making any movement to halt; “but I am here, and here I mean to be, till some redress is got for me and the rest of these poor men, who have been too long trodden under foot. I pray you to move your horse on one side, or else some of them may back him a little too rudely.”

“I am not afraid of that, friend,” replied the curate; “neither do I mean to get out of the way. I came on purpose to meet you, to place myself in the midst of you, and to ask what you mean by thus setting the laws of your country at defiance, and creating alarm among all peaceable people. Fie, men, fie!—this might happen elsewhere, but in Waltham I certainly never did expect to witness a scene so discreditable.”

“What makes it discreditable?” demanded Wall, fiercely: “is it discreditable to seek the means of supporting our families by honest industry?”

“Surely not,” replied Mr. Jacobson, round whom the crowd had by this time assembled; “every exertion of honest industry is to be

commended. But what does all this mean? what is it that you intend?"

"To smash those cursed threshing-machines, to be sure!" exclaimed several voices at once.

"They talk of want of employ," continued Wall; "why then, if there is not work enough for men, use wood and iron to do it?"

"This is not the time for arguing such points," replied the curate, "nor did I meet you to do so; I came here hoping that, for your own sakes—ay, for my sake—you would be persuaded to disperse, and go quietly each man to his own house. But, since you put the question to me, I tell you that you have no more right to destroy a man's threshing-machine than he would have to destroy your spades and axes, and then refuse to pay you because you could not cultivate the soil without them. Besides, have you forgotten what the chairman said at the last quarter-sessions, when the men were tried for the very offence which you threaten?"

"Whoo! whoo!" roared out many voices from the throng; "never mind what he said—what did he do? gave them three days' imprisonment; and we are all ready to take that, provided we get rid of threshing-machines."

“But you forget, my good fellows, that this merciful sentence of the magistrates was severely blamed by the King’s government. For God’s sake, mind what you are about ! I tell you, that the first man among you that lays his hand on a machine will be marked, and as sure as he is marked he will be transported. You shall not go forward another step on this errand ; I myself will withstand you. I never wish to do anything to my own people except in kindness ; but you may rely upon it that I will not look quietly on and see even you break the laws.”

“Now, sir,” said a man whose countenance was strange to Mr. Jacobson, and who was evidently not one of the body which he helped to put in motion, “don’t you think that it is not quite safe for you to hold such language to us ? We are not in church now, neither are we in a humour to listen to a sermon. My advice to you is, to go home, and let us take our own way, and we won’t interfere with yours.”

Mr. Jacobson instantly spurred his horse through the throng, and seizing the speaker by the collar, dragged him towards him, while he said, “I am not afraid to go among my own people at any season or under any circumstances ; and I am as little afraid to make a

prisoner of one who has no business where he is except a bad one: you, at all events, shall go with me."

The man struggled, but the curate held his grasp, till the former, throwing himself upon the ground, compelled Mr. Jacobson to let go, in order to keep his horse from trampling upon him. But the stranger was no sooner risen again than he drove his horse towards him a second time. The crowd, however, interposed, and in a tone rather of entreaty than of menace besought him that he would not push the matter further. Dick Solley, in particular, was the spokesman on this occasion; of which Mr. Jacobson took advantage, by working upon his better feelings, and striving to enlist him on the side of order: nor did he entirely fail. "Unstable as water," Dick could not withstand the appeals which the man whom he had in early youth been taught to respect made to him.

"There is not a man among us that would not follow you, sir, through the world," cried he. "But what can we do with the farmers? They won't employ us; and when they do, they pay us at a rate that scarce keeps soul and body together. Why should a single man that does as much, or maybe more, than a married

man, get only half the wages that are paid to his neighbour?—and why should they take off the men's pay, at this season too, when coals and candles are most wanted? Only promise to get these grievances redressed, and we will go wherever you choose to lead, and do whatever you choose to order."

"I have no authority, Richard, to make any bargain with you," replied Mr. Jacobson: "and even if I had, this is not the time when I should exercise it. You must first of all disperse and return to your work, and then I shall be ready to mediate between you and your employers. But observe, that I pledge myself to nothing. Whatever is fair from man to man, I will try to bring about between you; but I give no promises, nor will I even seem to bargain with you while you are thus arrayed. Once more I ask, are you willing to follow me to the street, and to disperse when you arrive there?—or must I send off for a magistrate and a troop of horse to disperse you?"

"Let's go with Mr. Jacobson," cried a dozen of voices together. "Let us leave our case to him: he will see us righted."

"Once more, my lads," said the curate aloud: "don't mistake me. I engage for nothing. I come here only to save you if I

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horse over a stile, and galloped towards the same point. He reached it first, and beheld to his mortification and annoyance the machine brought out into the field by the direction of its owner, as if to put every facility in the way of the rioters to break it. But Mr. Jacobson had assumed his part, and he was determined at all hazards to go through with it. He dismounted, and taking his station in front of the machine, challenged any man in the crowd to lay a violent hand upon it. One man advanced, brandishing a hammer.

“Strike!” said the curate,—“strike, at your peril.”

The man raised his weapon, looked fiercely into the curate’s countenance, saw that his eye did not twinkle nor his cheek blanch, and dropped his hand without inflicting a blow. A parley followed, in which Mr. Jacobson’s firmness prevailed, and the mob once more desisted from their purpose. Indeed, it seemed as if they were now completely vanquished; for even those who had hitherto yielded, rather from the influence of example than on account of any impression made upon themselves, manifested symptoms of perfect willingness to obey the wishes of their new leader. “Mr. Jacobson for ever!—we will go with Mr. Jacobson!”

burst from every one present ; and they did go quietly, some leading his horse, others holding by the stirrup-leather, and many more stating their grounds of complaint with an earnest entreaty that he would do his best to get them removed. But the curate would not permit them to march in a body through the village. Halting them, therefore, about a couple of hundred yards from the entrance of it, he delivered to them a short lecture on the great impropriety of their conduct, and on the narrow escape which they had made from its consequences, and wound up by requiring that they would go off by twos and threes in different directions towards their respective homes. Never were schoolboys more obedient ; they broke up into small groups, and he, having waited in the middle of the road till he saw the last section depart, rode leisurely to the vicarage, and gave his horse to the groom.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESULTS OF A STORM.

“ Now, are not you a nice set of fellows, to be blown about hither and thither by the breath of a parson !” said Marshall to a body of six or seven of the most daring of the men, among whom Wall and Dick Solley were included. “ I think I never saw anything to equal this. You would not do anything underhand !—you would show them that you felt like men, and that you could act like men ! How very close is the picture to the reality !—Bah ! I am ashamed of you quite.”

“ You can’t be more ashamed than I am,” answered Wall. “ I did not think—I could not have believed—that a hundred and fifty Englishmen would have been turned aside from their purpose by one parson. What right have we to complain any more after this ? For my part, if they offer us two shillings a week, instead of two shillings a day, I hold

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Dick," said Marshall, "t
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"You shall not want for
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eaten and drunk enough, you break up and go quietly home. No doubt it would have been as well had this row never taken place, for you have only rendered your condition worse, by barking where you could not bite. But better put up with evils that you know, than run the risk of others of which the amount may be greater. Go and give the men an allowance; and then to your homes, every one of you."

"To be sure we will," exclaimed Wall and Dick Solley, hurrying off towards the nearest of the groups, with which they held a short conference. Immediately one from that body hastened to a second, which again communicated to a third, and so on, till in due time about sixty persons were again brought together. Then they betook themselves to the Anchor and the Lion, of which the tap-rooms were very soon crowded; nor for an hour and a half was any sound discernible among them except loud and general conversation. But as the daylight began to wax dim, and the liquor to act, topics more immediately bearing upon their existing condition were introduced. It is not necessary to specify to what these in their turn led, nor yet to adduce the arguments which carried conviction to every mind. Enough is done, when I state that, grasping once more the

farmhouse outside the yard
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aloud, to another and another
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fore Mr. Jacobson knew that
had taken place, such an
the insane fury of the riot
influence could be expected
to control it.

When the alarm spread
the curate, with four or five
came together, it was felt
by the former, that interference
would now accomplish nothing
was, however, sent off for
trate, — unfortunately not
for he happened to be from

to the scene of danger, but sent back a message, that the presence of a magistrate in such cases was not necessary, inasmuch as every one of the King's subjects had a perfect right to interfere for the preservation of the King's peace. Now there was nobody at Waltham who doubted this,—the very sexton knew the fact; but the sexton knew also, that the presence of one having authority carries with it encouragement to the well-disposed, in the very same degree in which it excites alarm and misgivings among the disorderly. The peaceable people of Waltham accordingly contented themselves with murmuring against what they pronounced the shameful indifference of the squire, and then betook themselves each to his own home. Neither did they go abroad again when, about nine o'clock at night, the village rang with the shouts of a triumphant mob, glorying in the destruction of every threshing-machine within a circle of two or three miles around the place. On the contrary, the women and children shuddered, while the men looked about for weapons of defence, not knowing how soon they might be attacked in their very dwellings. But for such apprehensions there was no ground: the rioters had fully accomplished their designs, and, after giving three cheers,

filed off by ones and twos to their respective dwellings.

"We shall not be disturbed any more to-night, my dear," said Mr. Jacobson to his wife, as the clock struck twelve. "The village is as quiet as a city of the dead: I think you may safely go to bed."

Scarcely were the words uttered, when a heavy trampling of horses' hoofs sounded outside the vicarage. Those within listened, when immediately the gate bell was rung with violence, and the curate started up.

"Don't go, my love!" exclaimed his wife—"depend upon it the people have broken out again. Pray, pray, don't trust yourself outside the gate!"

"I must go, my dear," replied Mr. Jacobson; "whatever the cause of this alarm may be, I must see what is wanted. Besides, I heard horses, and the mob were not mounted, you know."

Mr. Jacobson went out, opened his gate, and gave admission, not to any gang of rioters, but to the high sheriff of the county, who, followed by a numerous band of gentlemen and their servants mounted, and escorted by a troop of dragoons, was come to make prisoners of the ringleaders in the late disturbances. The pre-

sence of the curate being required as a duty, Mr. Jacobson would not shrink from affording it. He had seen no machine actually broken, though he was able to identify the persons of those who took an active part in the disturbances of the morning; and as these were greatly suspected of having promoted, if they did not positively occasion, the outrages that followed, to arrest them was considered a point of the first importance. Then began a scene of which it would be difficult by any power of language to convey an accurate representation. The slumbers of the people of Waltham were broken by the tramp of steeds, and the voices of men speaking eagerly and in anger. Steel scabbards jingled, when there was no possible occasion for them; parties rode hither and thither through the fields, to drag from their beds misguided men, now dreaming of their own prowess and their own triumph; while here and there one culprit more vigilant than the rest, leaping from his window, fled across the country, and escaped the arm of the law. Undoubtedly, if it was the sheriff's wish to strike terror into the whole neighbourhood, he succeeded: for the blow fell with the rapidity of thought; and the rioters were torn from their families, and far advanced under military escort towards the

county gaol, ere they had fully awakened to a consciousness of their perilous condition.

When the day that succeeded this disastrous night came in, the aspect of affairs in and around Waltham exhibited a striking contrast to that which had prevailed previous to the disturbance. Women and children moved hither and thither, mourning over the arrest of those most dear to them, and execrating the counsels which had brought about such a result, and of which but twelve hours ago they had been the strenuous advocates. Such of the rioters as had been overlooked or spared, either hastened to pursue their wonted labours in the fields, where they slunk aside as often as they saw or imagined that they had become subjects of observation to those who employed them. Nor was the effect produced upon the farmers less remarkable. Evidently less happy at the vindication of the law, than thunderstruck at the occurrence of events of which they had never contemplated the possibility, they manifested no disposition whatever to triumph over the humbled labourers. It seemed, on the contrary, that feelings not very dissimilar to those which once united the master to his servant had been revived among them; for they spoke kindly to their people, and voluntarily undertook to deal

with them, provided they proved themselves deserving, in a spirit of the utmost liberality. Moreover, Marshall, who up to yesterday had been regarded as an oracle, was now loaded with maledictions.

"This is the triumph you promised my husband!" cried the wife of Wall, who was of course among the prisoners. "Would to God he had never listened to you! What am I to do with my babes now? how am I to keep them?"

"It was a black day that ever brought you here," exclaimed another woman, whose husband had been torn from her side over-night. "We might suffer a little, and we did suffer; but what was that to be compared with the scrape into which your advice has brought us? Oh! my poor Jem, I will never see him more."

Marshall was by far too skilful to think of opposing either argument or remonstrance to the first overflowings of a woman's indignation; he therefore bore the reproaches that were heaped upon him with great stoicism; nor was it till an interval of some days had elapsed that he ventured to speak to the mourners in the language of encouragement. When he did speak, however, he was listened to attentively,

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"I expected better things from you. What though they do transport you?—you will leave no wife and children behind as I shall; and in the new country to which you must be sent, who knows what good may befall you? Cheer up, man! you make me blush for your manhood, and you damp the spirits of those whom you helped to bring into the scrape, and whom it is therefore your duty to encourage."

"I don't think of that, Wall. No, no! there are other matters to trouble me much more important;—my poor mother!"

"I am sorry for your mother, certainly," replied Wall; "but there is no help for her. Besides, if it was your fortune to be transported, you could not avoid it; and she may find consolation in the thought, that you are sent out of the country for no offence against God's laws, however you may have broken man's. Had we followed that scoundrel's advice, the case would have been different. If you had been concerned in Amos's fire, then indeed she might have looked on you as disgracing her for ever."

"Ay, Wall, if I had—and what if I had?"

"I don't believe it—I won't believe it," cried Wall. "At all events, I beg of you not to drop

such a hint again, either to me or to anybody else. You can't tell what men may be tempted to do for the sake of getting themselves out of trouble."

Wall walked away from his companion as he spoke; but soon afterwards returned, to impress upon him more and more earnestly the necessity for mental exertion; and he so far succeeded, that Dick cleared his brow to a certain extent, and seemed to wait his approaching trial with the same dogged indifference that characterized the deportments of the rest.

At last the day of trial came; concerning which it is unnecessary to say more, than that eight of the principal rioters, including both Wall and Dick Solley, appeared in the dock. The evidence against them all was without a flaw; neither could the ingenuity of the counsel, who had been hired to conduct the defendants' case, shake it. Then came an appeal to character, which so far prevailed, that those of whom competent authorities spoke well had their sentences commuted from transportation, the pronounced penalty, to different periods of imprisonment with hard labour. Among the individuals thus leniently dealt with, neither Wall nor Dick Solley were included. The former, indeed, had rendered

himself so conspicuous, that to permit any consideration of the state of his large family to weigh against the demands of justice, would have been fatal in its consequences ; and harrowing and heart-breaking was the scene that took place, when his wife, with seven children, one of them an infant at the breast, came to take leave of him, probably for ever. Yet, distressing as it was, it had about it scarcely more of interest, with much less of mystery, than the parting interview between Dick and his brother Giles. The latter no sooner heard the result of the trial, than he applied for, and obtained, permission to visit his brother in the gaol. By the kindness of the gaoler, moreover, an opportunity which Dick eagerly sought of opening his mind to him in secret was afforded ; and the relatives were, in consequence, closeted together the whole of the night. No one knew what had passed between them during that long interview. From time to time, indeed, the watchman in going his rounds heard their voices in loud discussion, with an occasional exclamation, through the thick door ; but no articulate sound reached him ; and even these bursts of passion never seemed to endure. The result of the whole was, however, this :—When the coach arrived which was

to convey the convicts to the hulks, at the prison-door,—and, with equal mercy and promptitude, it came on the very morning after the sentences had been passed,—Giles Solley led his brother forth, and handed him, manacled as he was, to his seat at the back of the vehicle. He then pressed his hand, repeated twice the word “remember,” and turned away without shedding a tear. Neither was he observed to allude to him at all after his return to Waltham, except once. It chanced that, on the Sunday, Mr. Jacobson, after preaching a sermon on the occasion, walked down to Crackstakes, in order to condole with Giles and his mother.

“I am much obliged to you, sir,” observed Giles in reply, “for your kind expressions of regret; but I will be still more obliged if you never mention his name again. Richard is a fortunate man to be where he is—I trust he will make use of his good fortune as he ought.”

THE OVERSEER.



THE OVERSEER.

CHAPTER I.

PROPOSALS.

THE rapidity with which, in a country place, where order is the rule, and confusion the exception, people revert after an outbreak to their accustomed habits, would astonish the more mercurial and perhaps reflecting inhabitants of a great town. In Waltham, for example, no outward trace of the convulsion to which it had recently been subjected could, after a week had elapsed, be discovered. The labourers were all returned to their usual occupations; a meeting of the tenantry had likewise been held, at which it was agreed to portion out the men among the occupiers according to the extent of each man's occupation; while, instead of drawing a line between the pay of the married and the single men, the former were, under certain restric-

tions, to be kept on throughout six, the latter for three days, in each week at full wages. By these means it was hoped to smooth down whatever acerbity might prevail on either side, without giving a triumph to the paupers : and, imperfect as the device was, it certainly had the desired effect so long as it was adhered to.

In spite, however, of this outward show of renewed good-humour, no man interested in the welfare of the place could conceal from himself that the different orders of society were now divided by a gulf, such as had never divided them before. The utmost suspicion, indeed, prevailed everywhere. The principal parishioners, trusting none of their people, concerted a system of rural police, by which they became bound to protect one another's property from violence ; and night after night saw men armed at all points, and abroad, patrolling the parish, as if some foreign enemy were on the coast, or a civil war raging in the neighbourhood ! The immediate effect of this system unquestionably was to put a stop to the fires. Here and there an act of incendiarism was committed—for incendiarism had become a disease, which no precautionary measures could remove all at once ; but, generally speak-

ing, one species of property was preserved at the expense of a heavy outlay of another. For an English farmer is not the sort of person to turn out night after night, especially in the winter. While the memory of danger is fresh, he will submit patiently enough to hardships; and with the prospect of personal loss before him in case he hold back, he will bestir himself for a season. But his endurance soon wears out; and, in the genuine spirit of a people enervated by long indulgence, he fancies that his purse will accomplish that which his body is too indolent to attempt. Whenever it comes to this, and the poor are hired to do what their betters refuse to do for themselves, there is an end to all kind of good faith between them:—you make it, in fact, the interest of the poor to excite alarm from time to time, in order that the system of stipendiary protection may be continued; while many a lawless act is perpetrated or connived at by the very persons to whom you look as the guardians of your rights and property.

Among the occupiers of Waltham, there was no one on whom recent events produced so powerful an effect as Mr. Amos. It is true that of his losses he affected to speak with indifference; and being a man of great reso-

lution, he bore himself in all companies as if nothing of the kind had befallen. Yet was the impression made upon him such as he found it impossible to disguise from any attentive spectator. He was no longer the bully that he used to be. His language to the poor was civil, bordering upon submissive ; and he ceased to advocate in his management of parish matters an economy which might be described as needlessly rigid. Moreover, the independent tone, bordering upon defiance, with which he was accustomed to salute and converse with his neighbours, became very much softened. He even talked once or twice of coming to church ; and when the curate, taking advantage of his situation, endeavoured to draw him into a more careful review of his condition as a responsible being, it was said that he shed tears. Still, Amos was a proud man ; and pride, after being indulged for more than forty years, becomes a portion of man's nature. Besides, he was peculiarly jealous of his solvency ; and when forced to admit, on the return of settling day, that it was impossible for him to pay his bills with the promptitude that formerly characterised him, he did so with a bitterness that went far to convince his creditors that he was

your recent losses, and holding your head as high among your neighbours as ever you did," replied Marshall.

"That is more than you can manage, I suspect," answered Amos; "and, to say the truth, I have no particular fancy to lay myself under obligations to such as you."

"Why so?" demanded the other. "Are not our principles of religion and politics the same? Do we not both hate the aristocracy? Is it not the great wish of our hearts to see an end put to corruption of every sort, so that all men may possess equal rights, and the condition of all be improved?"

"This is mighty fine, Mr. Marshall," replied Amos; "but I doubt whether we shall agree as to the means of effecting so much good. I am not one that would stir up the servant to rebel against the master."

"No, but you would stir up the tenant to rebel against the landlord; and the duty of obedience—if it be a duty—is, I take it, quite as binding in the case of landlord and tenant, as in reference to those whom you are pleased to describe as servant and master."

"What! are not my labourers my servants? Don't I pay them wages, and are they not bound to obey me?"

“Undoubtedly you pay them wages, for which you get their labour in return. As far as their labour is concerned, they are certainly your servants,—that is to say, you can put them about any such job as you may fancy. But, apart from this, they are as much the masters of their own proceedings as you can be. In fact, they are traders. They sell their labour to you for your money; but they do not sell their personal liberty.”

“I don’t understand such doctrine: I don’t see what right a man whom I employ has to object to any arrangements which I may choose to make. Is it not always competent to me to dismiss him?”

“Without doubt it is: but when you have dismissed him, you have inflicted as great a loss upon yourself as upon him,—that is, supposing you to need his services, and that there is nobody standing by to fill his place.”

“Look you, Mr. Marshall; I want none of your lectures on political economy. It is quite clear to me, that every person whom I employ—who is fed, and clothed, and his family maintained by my money, is my servant: and it is equally clear to me, that where there are so many more labourers than are needed, a large proportion of them must either be paupers or

servants to the parish. I defy you to get out of that, though you talk all night about it."

"I admit that wherever there is a greater number of labourers than can be provided with regular employ, the surplus must become paupers,—and, according to the horrid laws now in force, worse than servants—serfs, slaves to the parish. But then, it is only because your unjust laws, by throwing the burthen of maintaining this surplus on the occupiers of land, binds down the poor man to some particular parish as completely as if he had been born in thralldom. Let these laws be repealed, and the rich and the poor will stand in their natural relation to each other; both being free to carry their capital where they choose, and both being left to make the most of it."

"I wish to God we saw it brought to this!" exclaimed Mr. Amos with a sneer. "Relieve me of the burthen of helping to maintain a parcel of useless and turbulent paupers, and you may call the paupers themselves by any name you please."

"Well, well," observed Marshall, perceiving that he had accomplished his end, and that the ice in which Mr. Amos had at first encased himself was thawed, "we are only wandering from our proper subject. I repeat, that I can

put you in the way of retrieving all your losses, even though twice as great as I suspect them to be, provided you are willing to embark with me in a little secret business, which needs capital, caution, and courage. Of the last commodity I know you to possess a very large stock; can you furnish any portion of the two former?"

"When I have heard the nature of the business," answered Amos, "I shall be better able to reply. How is this stock-in-trade to be used?"

"Not in maintaining the arbitrary laws of our arbitrary government, certainly," replied Marshall. "I suppose you would not be very reluctant to enrich yourself, even though in doing so it might be necessary to diminish the King's revenue?"

"You know very well that I am not much given to respect kings, nor of course to contribute willingly to their revenues. If that be the only obstacle in the way of a successful trade, I shall not be stopped by it from embarking."

"You answer as I expected," said Marshall. "Now mark me: you have all seen how well my business has thriven, even while I undersold every other tradesman in the place, and

for many miles round it. Has it never occurred to you to ask by what means I contrived to accomplish this? Something, no doubt, may be done everywhere, provided a man have such a command of capital as will enable him to go into the market and pay ready money for his goods; but no amount of ready-money dealings will ever render his trade a thriving one, who sells in the country at a less charge than he can purchase for in London. How do you imagine I have contrived to supply the good people in Waltham and the adjoining parishes with tea, spices, tobacco, and other necessaries, nearly thirty per cent. under prime cost?"

"Unless you smuggle your goods, I can't tell how you manage it."

"You have hit it exactly, Mr. Amos: I do smuggle my goods—and smuggle to an extent far beyond what you or any other man in this neighbourhood ever dreamed of. I tell you, that if you give me an order for a smuggled piano-forte, or a chest of drawers, or a set of dining-tables and chairs, I will buy them in Paris, and deliver them to you at any place you may name, within as short a space of time as will be required to convey and to execute the commission. What do you think of that?"

"First of all, that you are a monstrous rash

person, to put yourself so completely as you have done in the power of a comparative stranger; and next, that if what you say be true, you must have dealings with the devil. Why, the whole line of coast from Brighton to the Thames is watched night and day by the blockade men. I confess I can't imagine how you contrive to throw dust into fifteen hundred pair of eyes."

"But I do throw dust into them notwithstanding," replied Marshall, chuckling: "and as to trusting you with my secret, it is paying you no compliment that you don't deserve, when I say that I did so, because I felt perfectly secure that I should never be betrayed."

"No, I am not the man to turn informer," replied Amos, evidently becoming more and more interested in the discussion every moment; "you are therefore safe enough with me. But tell me, how is all this managed? In the first place, the capital embarked must be very large; and in the second, you must possess channels of information, and even the command of physical strength, such as it would pass our wit to calculate. You can't stand alone in the matter."

"I have not scrupled to put my own life in your hands, Mr. Amos," said Marshall; "but

you can't expect that I will entrust you with the secrets of others, till I know how far you are disposed to throw in your lot among us. What do you say to taking a share of the risk, and of course a share of the profit along with it?"

"I should be better able to answer the question, Marshall, if I saw the company's books, or had some other means of forming a fair guess as to the probable amount of the profits."

"The company's books are not here; neither am I more than a very humble partner in the concern; indeed, I can scarcely look upon myself as more than an agent: yet, if you will go home with me, I think that I shall be able to show you what will remove every scruple from your mind on the score of profits."

"Once again, Marshall," said Amos, solemnly; "is this commonly prudent behaviour on your part? You know nothing of me except by report; and yet you not only tell me tales, by repeating which I should cause a thousand unfriendly eyes to watch you, but you offer to place me in a situation where I may ruin you whenever I please."

"And once again," replied Marshall, frankly, "I repeat, that I believe you to be de-

serving of all confidence. If you are not to be trusted, who is?"

"Well, then, lead on," observed Mr. Amos.

Marshall did lead; and Amos following, they soon arrived at the dwelling of the former, into which they were admitted by means of a check key. There stood on a table in the passage a japanned tin lantern, through the perforations in the top of which a few rays of light were streaming, but which did not permit so much of the flame of the candle to be seen, as might, even had the door hung open, attract the notice of the passers-by. Marshall, after carefully bolting his door, took up the lantern, and whispering to his companion to tread lightly, for fear of awaking the house-keeper, raised a small portion of the lid, so as to allow a little more light to escape. He then moved on, Amos treading close in his rear, till they had passed through the shop, and reached a sort of wash-house or back-kitchen that lay beyond. Marshall, after closing and bolting that door also, drew back the tin cover of his lantern altogether, and passing it rapidly along the wall, ascertained, not only that the shutters were up in the window, and the back door closed, but that both door and

window were additionally darkened by curtains of thick sacking hung over them. This done, he handed the lantern to Mr. Amos, and advancing himself towards the fire-place, withdrew a brick from one part of the hearth, and inserting his hand into the aperture, raised the stone itself. Mr. Amos stooped forward, and holding the lantern downwards, beheld the mouth of a sort of cave, against which a ladder or trap-stairs leaned.

"Let us descend," said Marshall, in a low tone: "you won't see half the merits of my device by standing here, nor any portion of my treasure."

Marshall, now taking the lantern, got upon the ladder and went down; while Amos, having observed that there was a cellar underneath in which his companion found no difficulty to stand upright, followed without hesitation.

"Close the trap-door after you, pray," whispered Marshall. "Walls, they say, have both eyes and ears; and I should look extremely silly if my own back-kitchen were to appear in court against me."

Mr. Amos did as he was desired, and was astonished, while doing so, to observe that the ponderous stone moved with a facility which

showed with what skill it had been balanced. And now the mouth of the aperture being shut, the light streamed round in such volumes as to give him a pretty accurate notion of the sort of place to which he had been introduced. It was a cave, measuring perhaps eight feet in width, though apparently interminable in length. On either side of a narrow passage stood bales, casks, packages, and boxes, every one of which his companion assured him contained silks, laces, spicery, tea, tobacco, and spirits. There were also one or two cases containing musical snuff-boxes, trinkets, chains, and other fancy articles; several of which, to the unpractised eye of Mr. Amos, appeared to be of incalculable value. But this was not all. Again requesting his companion to follow, Marshall led him on to the end of the cavern, a space of perhaps thirty feet, where he beheld another trap-stair erected, and another flat stone fastened in the soil above.

"That leads to a bed of pinks in my garden," said Marshall, "which my people know how to remove and to replace; and through that door, as opportunity offered, those goods that you saw have been admitted. Once here, however, and all danger and difficulty are over. Many a valuable parcel your coaches

carry to town ; and the fish-vans are the handiest things in the world. Now, then, what say you ? are you willing to take a share in the concern ? Say yes or no."

" I say yes, without hesitation," replied Amos. " Tell me only what you want me to do, how much money to advance, and how much danger to encounter ; and, d—n me, I am your man for anything."

" We will arrange these points to-morrow," replied Marshall. " In the mean while, let me make you free of the cellar."

So saying, he drew forth a horn cup from behind one of the casks, and opening a case, took from it a bottle of champagne. The cork was drawn, and the confederates, at a couple of draughts, emptied the bottle. This done, they returned to the entrance. They re-ascended as they had gone down, carefully closed the trap-door, re-passed once more through the shop, and again shrouded the light. Finally, Amos being turned forth to the street, the grocer made fast his front door, and passed quietly to bed.

CHAPTER II.

CONFEDERATION.

"Now then, Mr. Amos," said Marshall to his friend, on whom, according to agreement, he waited next morning, "what do you think of my line of business, and of my mode of carrying it on?"

"That it is the cleverest thing I ever saw in my life," replied Amos: "deuce take me if I have slept a wink all night for thinking of it. How, in Fate's name, did you contrive to scoop that place out; and how have you managed to keep your secret so well these six months past?"

"The place that you were in last night was all scooped out and ready before I came into this country. You don't imagine that this is a new concern, do you? Why, the trade has been going on these thirty years; though my partners have been obliged to conduct it with increased caution of late, and more than once

to shift the position of their depot. However, the point which you and I have to settle at present relates to another matter: you still keep to your engagement, of course?"

"Can you doubt it, my good fellow? Hang it! the prospect of such a business has put me quite into spirits again: for, to be honest with you, Marshall, that cursed fire ruined me quite."

"Then I take it you have not much money capital to advance?"

"Not a great deal, certainly; but I have a little, which I will throw in with tenfold satisfaction, because I cannot doubt of realizing from it, in a short time, more than enough to put me clear with the world. I have a couple of hundreds at your service, which I had set aside against rent-day next month, but which you can use, and welcome, in the mean while."

"Even a couple of hundreds may be turned to account," replied Marshall: "besides, we have a rule that no one can become a shareholder who has not contributed something to the stock-purse. For your own sake, therefore, I will take the money: but, to be candid with you, we look for more important services at your hands than your purse can accomplish. You are a bold, resolute man, fit to command

others in situations of difficulty and danger ;— and the free trade is not carried on, you know, without incurring both difficulties and dangers. Are you willing to risk your person ?”

“ Most men know that a trifle is not apt to daunt me,” answered Amos ; “ yet I own that I have some reluctance to appear before the world in the character of an avowed smuggler. Anything that requires a stout heart and a strong arm I am ready to undertake, provided my good name be not put in jeopardy.”

“ Unless you be much more wanting in prudence than I give you credit for,” replied Marshall, “ your name need never come before the world in any other light than attaches to it now. What is wanted, is a brave, active, intelligent man, who will take charge of a certain line of coast, who will make himself perfectly master of all its bearings, with the different by-ways through the woods and marshes that lead to it ; and who, when anything is to be done, will have under his command people drawn from a remote part of the country, to whom his face and name will both be strange. You don’t suppose that we are weak enough to put our leaders in the power of their men ?”

“ Well, and what more is this person to do ?”

"Whenever it is determined to run a cargo, he will be informed. It will then be his business to repair to the spot fixed upon for assembling; to distribute his people in such a way as shall seem to him best calculated to ensure success; to avoid fighting if possible, but at all events to save the goods. All this, however, will of course take place under cover of night; so I don't see how your good name, or that of any other individual concerned in it, is to be hazarded at all. What say you to this?"

"And how may the leader be recompensed for the share of danger and fatigue which he undergoes?"

"By a per-centage on every article brought home. Suppose, for example, you were to act as captain to the Herne Bay gang, or the Sandwich Flats gang, or the Dungeness gang, or the Pevensey Bay gang, or any other gang, and to succeed in fetching here, or to any other of our depôts, say five hundred weight of tobacco, a dozen bales of silk, a hundred tubs of Geneva and Hollands, half-a-dozen chests of tea, with gloves, snuff-boxes, &c. in proportion, I will be bound to say that your per-centage as captain, independently of your profits as shareholder, would come to fifty pounds at the least:

and if you were so lucky as to manage this eight or ten times in the course of the year, I need not point out that your income would be pretty considerably increased."

"And how are the men collected, and how paid?"

"Oh, they are got easy enough. In times like these, when you farmers don't treat your people better than they deserve, we free-traders are never at a loss in finding hands. I tell you that some, both of the fighters and the workers, come from the very heart of the country. We don't object to take the people along the coast, to be sure; though, as I said before, we are always very careful to use them at a distance from their own homes, and under leaders that are strange to them: but for fighters we generally prefer your inland people, as less likely to be recognised."

"Well, but explain to me: what do you mean by fighters and workers? what is the difference between them?"

"Why, this. Say that we receive intelligence of the proposed landing of a very valuable boat, two nights hence, on the beach below Lydd. Our first business will be to warn the captain of Lydd, that he may hold himself in readiness to meet a gang either at the ruins

of St. Mary's Chapel, or at some other point inland, leaving to him the duty of fixing on the route which they shall follow either in advancing or retreating. Meanwhile, our constables about Lenham, or some other inland place, are directed to get together twenty fighters—that is, men who shall carry guns,—with a due proportion of threshers—that is, people armed with flails for close quarters. These move down by ones and twos the day before, and find on their arrival at the place appointed perhaps sixty men or so, unarmed. Here the captain joins them; and, if everything goes on well, they march down to within a short distance of the landing-place, where they conceal themselves as well as they can. By-and-by a light will be seen in the offing, as a signal that the boat is approaching. No notice is taken of it till it is repeated, when of course the Coast-blockade, as well as our people, are on the alert; and then, in order to deceive them, a corresponding light is shown, perhaps a mile off, by persons planted there for the purpose. Thither the Coast-blockade hasten; when, having allowed sufficient time for their removal out of your way, you throw up two rockets, one after the other. Instantly the boat replies, and is run on shore. Nor have you been idle

a moment; for, while the man is getting the rockets ready, you, who know that all is as it ought to be, run in towards the water-mark; and your fighters forming a couple of lines, your workers dash between them, and each loading himself, runs as if the devil chased him into the interior. If you manage matters so that the boat shall be unloaded ere the guard return, it is so much the better for yourselves; if otherwise, then you must make the most of it. But remember that it is not your business to fight for victory: what you want to accomplish is, that the landing of the goods shall be protected, and the boat shoved off and got to sea; and whenever this is done, it becomes your business to retreat. Of course, if the guard follow, you take care to check them, till you believe that the workers are beyond reach of being overtaken. And then away you go, dispersing to the four winds, and crying bad luck to the hindmost. Do you understand the sort of thing now?"

"I think I do," replied Amos, while his eye brightened considerably. "There must be some fun in all that. Hang it! I think I should like it for its own sake. But how are your workers and fighters paid?"

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them chance to be taken. I admit that in general they are as staunch as pointers, but it's no use incurring unnecessary hazards.

"Well, and when may my services be wanted?"

"As soon as ever you have made yourself so thoroughly acquainted with the bearings of the coast, as to be able to take charge of a bit of work, and get the goods conveyed to my garden. In fact, we have been stopped longer than we wished; first, because that ass Dick Solley proved unequal to his work, and got himself into a scrape with the machine-breakers; and next, because your cursed patrol has considerably embarrassed us. Now, how long is that foolish thing to go on?"

"Dick Solley! you don't mean to say that you entrusted him with the secret which you have confided to me?"

"Not to the same extent," replied Marshall; "I saw too much through my man to put myself entirely in his power: but I did tell him a great deal more than I ought to have done. However, we disposed of him in the best way in the world. He is gone where nobody will regard his tale if he publish it by beat of drum. It was a good job getting

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Marshall, after a

tion, admitted the

the confederates were mounted and ready within the hour. Their ride was one of great interest to both, and of positive excitement to one; for he was shown, during its progress, the exact limits of his command, and received a still greater insight than had yet been afforded him into the general method of conducting the free trade. The houses engaged in it had, as it appeared, regular agents both in France and Holland. Many of these were of a rank in society which exempted them from every suspicion; and all were intelligent, shrewd, skilful, and scrupulously honest. Still, the overseer could not draw from his companion any disclosure of names.

"It would do you no good if I were to give you a written list into your own hand," replied Marshall: "let my assurance content you, that some of the wealthiest companies in the City have an interest in the concern, and that the capital which you embark is as safe as if you lodged it in the Bank. Neither must you press me yet respecting our means of conveyance. I have already said that we make frequent use of the coaches, sometimes with the knowledge of the drivers, but more frequently without; and that every fish-van is at our disposal when we desire it: but I cannot tell you

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one continued series of humiliations. Her temper, naturally gentle, was not soured under this treatment, but her spirit was completely broken by it, while the very warmth of her feelings exposed her to become the dupe of almost any one who should strike at her principles through the medium of her affections. Poor girl! hers was indeed a hard case; and no one more accurately calculated the extent of that hardship, or better knew how to make use of it, than Mr. Marshall, more intelligent than any other person with whom she came in contact; the fact that it had succeeded became no longer as much a matter of congratulation to the girl as to himself. For, as I stated elsewhere, Mr. Amos had spared no expense in the education of his children; and they were, in consequence, as one by one they returned home, subjected to a thousand mortifications and annoyances, such as they would not otherwise have experienced. The exact nature of the connexion between her father and mother, for example, was not concealed from Charlotte; she had it not only from themselves, but from others; and, shunned and looked upon by young people better born, but much less highly educated than herself, her whole existence became

For a full fortnight, Mr. Amos, at his business, busied himself all day with the noisances of the farm upon his horse each day, and, very much to the surprise, never made his appearance long after dark. Dr. Marshall day after day, accident or another, in the farm. His arrival was disguised satisfaction by as he never came either prepared with some kind of lotte, she too had

was, as that which interposes itself, if I may so speak, between childhood and maturity. Gentle, confiding, conscious of the necessity under which she is laid of clinging to some one for support, the girl just let loose from school, yet excluded from the companionship of women grown, receives every mark of attention from those of the other sex not only with gratitude, but with wonder. And if she chance to have received in other quarters rebuffs and mortifications that gall her, then is his position who treats her differently one of perilous superiority—perilous not to the poor girl alone, for that all who look about them must perceive, but to the individual himself, who thus, perhaps, unconsciously establishes a supremacy in her heart. Though he kept a grocer's shop, and mixed familiarly in the way of business with the labouring classes in Waltham, no man knew these truths more fully than Marshall; nor was any one better inclined to turn them to such uses as his own humours or the accidents of time might suggest.

Charlotte Amos had received her education in a French convent. Uninstructed in the principles of that religion which her father utterly denied, she went to Boulogne a perfect child of nature, believing that there was a God, because

she heard that such a being existed, and not absolutely unacquainted with the contents of the Bible. Beyond this, however, neither her knowledge nor her wishes extended ; and she was of course an admirable subject on which the sisterhood could work. Finding that she knew nothing of the opinions of the Reformed Church, one of the nuns took her under her own especial guidance, and did her best to fill the poor girl's head with the most extravagant fictions. But Charlotte, who had attained to her thirteenth year before she entered the seminary, was by far too clever to give credit to such fables. She was old enough, moreover, to recollect that her father had repeatedly sneered at the doctrines of the parsons in general ; and concluding that these fictions made up a portion of them, she rejected, not them only, but the leading truths of religion, because in her own mind they were associated. No doubt there was a Protestant governess who did her best to check the evil ; but the Protestant governesses who attend the convents even of liberalized France have very little influence, except with those pupils whom their parents particularly recommend to them ; and as Mr. Amos would have laughed at the idea of putting his child under the care of one religious instruct-

ress rather than another, Charlotte derived from the presence of the lady in question very little benefit.

Such was the girl who, at the age of sixteen and a half, found herself suddenly thrown into the society of a man of thirty, who, though ostensibly but a tradesman, soon contrived to satisfy her that his tastes and acquirements were far beyond those of the persons whom she was accustomed to meet at her father's table. Marshall was not only an agreeable, but an educated man. With the French language he was familiar; he had read a great deal, and could talk pleasantly on almost every subject; and, above all, he was kind and considerate in his deportment. His attentions to Charlotte herself, in particular, were of the most delicate description; indeed, it seemed as if he wished her to look upon him rather in the light of an elder brother than anything else. Now, there is no bearing more dangerous than this when applied to the very young. Charlotte, who received few marks of attention from her father, and none at all from anybody else, soon began to look upon Marshall as the only real friend she had in the world; and once that idea is established in the mind of a girl of her years, the result in which it must terminate there

needs no prophet to foretel. The girl worshipped Marshall as a superior being: within ten days from the opening of their acquaintance,—and ere the fortnight expired, though he had never talked to her of love, she was altogether at his mercy.

Time passed, and Amos having made himself thoroughly acquainted with the face of the surrounding country, declared his readiness at any given moment to take charge of the running of a cargo. Marshall, who had received his two hundred pounds and transmitted them to the proper quarter, made his report where it was expected, and a night was fixed for the landing of a boat, of which the lading was understood to be of great value. Nothing could exceed the coolness and decision of the new leader, as well in making his previous preparations as in managing the enterprise. The cargo was landed, carried off, and conveyed to the depôt, without a life having been endangered or a shot fired; and a very considerable sum of money rewarded Amos for his exertions. Of course, he was delighted with his business and prospects: Marshall became more and more an inmate of his family every day, till the intimacy which had thus sprung up between them began to attract the attention of the parishioners, and

more than one idle joke passed current in consequence.

For a while Amos's duties as captain of a certain extent of coast neither interfered with his ordinary occupations as tenant of Ware, nor drew him, except on particular service, to any distance from home. At the end of six weeks, however, more frequent demands began to be made upon his time and intelligence. Though still kept profoundly in the dark as to the persons with whom he was associated, he received through Marshall repeated communications, all of them applauding his courage and skill, and some requiring increased exertions in the common cause. It was now no unfrequent case to find himself laid under the necessity of undertaking a journey into Sussex, and once at least as far as Hampshire; his expenses being duly paid and a present made to him over and above, he knew not by whom. It is scarcely necessary to say, that a life of continual excitement and profit accorded well with the tastes and circumstances of the man. Amos found himself growing richer day by day: he imagined that he had discovered Raleigh's El Dorado, and rejoiced in the delusion; while one whom nature ought to have made, and had made, most dear to him was suffering, less perhaps from his imme-

diate neglect, than from his previous mischievous training.

Thus days and weeks passed, throughout a considerable portion of which Marshall took care to be continually present with Charlotte. The mother of the latter, either trusting too much to the inequality of years between them, or, it may be, nothing loth to secure a wealthy husband for her child, not only gave her countenance to this intimacy, but by continually withdrawing, and leaving the couple to make the best use of their time, invited its continuance, till Charlotte certainly, and Marshall in appearance, began to look as if they felt awkward at being thus thrown upon one another's conversation. By way of relieving his fair companion from her restraint, Marshall once or twice, when her father was from home, invited her to walk abroad. She yielded to the request without scruple; and never had she known the rapture of a stroll by moonlight till she began to indulge in such a recreation with such a companion. As might be expected, Marshall invariably led her away from the noise and tumult of the village. They strolled down to the river-side, or taking their course through the wood that skirted the bottom of the meadow, watched in mute rapture the silvery light

as it broke through the bare branches overhead; and then, from time to time, some quiet ejaculation would burst forth, as if the heart, overcharged with feelings, knew not how longer to suppress its workings, though the lips might refuse to give full utterance to words, at the best very inadequate to describe ideas that defy the power of language to portray them. Perilous indeed were such scenes to one circumstanced as was Charlotte Amos; and long before the first month of spring came in, she knew to her sorrow that they never lead to good.

Meanwhile, the free trade, liable as it always must be to frequent and calamitous interruptions, went on upon the whole thrivingly. The cavern under Marshall's washhouse, for example, was never empty, though repeated packages, both by coach and van, went off from it, and the business at the shop brought in as large returns as it had ever done. For, in spite of Coast-blockade, parish patrols, and all other lets and hinderances besides, the contraband flourished—a consummation no small portion of the merit of which belonged to Mr. Amos. He was not only brave—a quality which had never been denied him—but he was vigilant, cautious, and full of resources; insomuch, that

to count upon perfect success, whenever the enterprise chanced to be committed to his guidance, grew into a habit with all ranks of persons connected with the trade. Even in the contraband, however, as in other pursuits, surpassing skill is sure to bring upon its owner surpassing trouble. Amos found himself gradually entrapped into the management of a circle of business which became wider every day, till the whole line of coast, from Brighton to the Nore, became in some degree subject to his management. It is scarcely just to say that he murmured at this. He did not murmur; for there is a feeling, be it of gratified ambition or vanity flattered, which induces men to bear cheerfully such toil as an admission of their own excellence lays upon them. But of the comforts of home he soon began to know nothing, except from recollection, and even that became continually more faint. At last indeed it came to this, that a day spent at Ware was not less of a treat to him than to the inmates of the place who looked up to him; for seldom indeed were they allowed to share one another's society, and scarcely ever to exchange those endearments which their relative positions entitled them mutually to expect.

"You don't look well, Charlotte," said Amos to his daughter, on one of the few evenings which he found himself at liberty to pass in her company; "you have lost your colour, and are getting very thin. What is the matter, child?"

"Oh, nothing, papa—nothing, I assure you," replied Charlotte with a languid smile; "unless it be that I fret myself to death because I now see so little of you. What can you be doing so continually from home, and out night after night, as has lately been the case with you?"

"Never mind what I do, child, so long as I earn the means of keeping you and your brothers and sisters respectably: and, hear me, never trouble yourself to put such a question again, either to me or to anybody else. Whenever I am in the humour of confiding the history of my proceedings to you, I will do so without being asked; and I recommend you not to thrust your head unnecessarily into other people's affairs."

"La, now, Mr. Amos," interposed the housekeeper, "how can you answer so gruffly! I am sure Letty did not mean to be impertinent; and there's no use in jibing young people at that rate."

"I did not mean to jibe you, child," said

Amos, perceiving the tears gather in Charlotte's eyes: "no, no, not a bit of it. Come hither, love; give me a kiss. There, there, I am not angry with you, not a bit of it. But you are poorly, love—I see you are; what is the matter?"

Charlotte, not much accustomed to be addressed in an affectionate tone by her father—who, albeit he loved her tenderly, was rude even in displaying his milder feelings—became only more and more overcome by this treatment. The tear which had gathered in her eye and stood there soon burst its bounds, and another and another followed in rapid succession over her haggard cheek. She buried her head in her father's bosom, and sobbed aloud.

"Now, Letty, dear," exclaimed he, powerfully affected, "this is what I cannot at all comprehend. There must be something much more than common the matter. Why do you weep so? What is it that ails you?"

"Oh, nothing, papa, dear papa—nothing at all, I assure you: but I wish you were not so much from home—I wish you never had been so much from home."

"Why so, child? what harm do you suffer from my absence? Have you not everything here that you can desire?—your music, your

piano, your drawing-book, your needlework? How can my absence affect you one way or another? Surely your mother does not presume to behave ill to you?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Charlotte, eager as it seemed to hinder her mother from catching that unkind allusion; "my mother is all to me that a mother can be: yet I have sadly, sadly wanted you;—oh that you had never left us!"

"Good God! woman," cried Amos, addressing his housekeeper, "what have you been doing with my daughter? If I thought you capable of using a child of mine harshly, by heavens I would send you packing at a moment's notice! Have you forgotten that you have no legal claim upon me for maintenance, beyond what my own inclination may afford?"

"I have never used your daughter harshly, Mr. Amos," replied the degraded creature who superintended his household affairs; "if I had, I should have been the most unnatural of monsters; for though I may have no legal claim upon you, she has the same claim upon me that she has upon you. You forget that she is my daughter as well as yours?"

"What! am I to be branded by a ——?"

"Hush, hush, papa! for God's sake, hush!"

cried Charlotte, eagerly putting her hand before his mouth; "do not speak harshly to my mother, at least in my presence. Alas! alas! you know not how every word that you utter wrings my heart."

"I never would speak harshly to your mother, child, if she was not too apt to forget herself. But I will never allow her to assume the airs of a wife in my presence, that she may depend upon,—or consider herself your equal, or the equal of any honest child of mine."

The unfortunate woman concerning whom this strange language was used, had been too long accustomed to the upbraidings and reviling of her keeper, to sustain from them more than a temporary mortification. On the present occasion, therefore, she did what she had often done before,—she withdrew to another room till the gale should blow over; while Amos, as if relieved by her departure, took his daughter on his knee, and began again to question her as to the cause of her dejection. She persisted, however, in asserting that there was no cause for it. She repeated, indeed, over and over again, expressions of regret that her father had so much absented himself of late, and mixed them up with urgent entreaties that he would not do so in future.

But beyond this he could draw nothing from her, and was beginning to desist from the attempt, when the servant girl opened the parlour-door, and Marshall entered. In an instant Charlotte sprang from her father's lap, as if she had been surprised in some unworthy or indelicate situation. A deep crimson flush overspread her cheeks, the tears that had previously flowed in showers became congealed in their fountain, and her voice faltered, as she returned the visitor's salutation. Marshall's glance, likewise, would have indicated to a minute observer the working of some secret and perhaps anxious feeling within. He blushed slightly, faltered somewhat in his speech, and appeared confused; but he was not a sort of person to be thrown entirely, or for any length of time, off his guard. Before the greetings usually given and taken in such circumstances had passed, he was himself again,—that is to say, calm, cool, collected, and civil almost to the extent of obsequiousness.

“I want one word with you in private, Mr. Amos,” said he.

“Surely, surely,” replied the other.

“Leave us, Letty, for a minute or two; our confab won't last long, and I will ring the bell when it is over.—That child is not well, Mar-

shall," continued he, as the girl rose to withdraw; "and for the life of me I can't think what is the matter."

"I must say one word to you before you go," whispered Charlotte to Marshall as she passed him. Marshall answered with a glance of assent, and she disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

SCHEMES AND FANTASIES.

“ I HAVE come to acquaint you,” said Marshall, as soon as the door was closed, “ that a communication has just been made to me which will render it necessary for you to bestir yourself very shortly, under the most delicate circumstances. A boat will leave Rochelle at one o’clock to-morrow morning, laden with a cargo so valuable, that its seizure would involve us all in very heavy losses, if not in positive ruin. It is arranged that the goods shall be landed somewhere between Dymchurch and Dungeness; the exact spot to be indicated, after the first signal shall have been given, by the letting off of three blue lights. The signal for the boat is to be, first one flash, to denote that she is on the coast; and then two, to imply that her crew are ready to run her ashore anywhere. What say you? are

you prepared to start betimes in the morning, and to superintend the affair?"

"Quite ready," replied Amos, "if my presence be absolutely required. But supposing no more serious obstacle to stand in the way than you have just stated, I really don't see why the captain of Romney Marsh should not manage the matter quite as well as I."

"Ay, if there were no more serious obstacles in the way. But there are such obstacles. Some devil has betrayed us. We have ascertained that the Custom-house people are awake to what is going to happen; and, what is worst of all, there is no time to stop the expedition. Unless, therefore, you be on the spot, I for one despair of saving a stiver's worth."

"Why not direct your people to leave the boat's signal unanswered? In that case, she will of course put back, and the goods will be saved, to be brought over at a more convenient opportunity."

"There again you are mistaken. The custom-houses on the opposite side have all been put up to what is going on; and though they mean to connive at the lugger's sailing, they will be on the alert to hinder her from getting back till she shall have been overhauled."

“Pooh, pooh! don’t think of humbugging me. What though they do overhaul her?—as she will not be laden with articles that are contraband in France, why should the French custom-house refuse to pass her?”

“I tell you that there are cruisers without end sent out to intercept her, with row-boats and gallies innumerable; and as to goods contraband in France, half her lading is as much liable to seizure in a French port as in an English. Besides, we are under positive articles to deliver certain things in London against a certain hour;—and let happen what will, this cargo must be run. Of course the per-centage will be increased in proportion to the risk. What do you say? are you willing to incur some hazard for the sake of a great gain,—such a gain as may enable you, if you desire it, to withdraw from an active part in the business ever after?”

Amos was silent for several minutes, as if weighing the amount of risk against the probable amount of profit. At last he declared his willingness to undertake the perilous service proposed to him, on condition that he should never again be required to go upon any expedition except such as his own fancy might tempt him voluntarily to undertake. To this

Marshall readily agreed; and then followed a general discussion of the proposed plan, together with a consultation as to the amount of force that might be required, and the extent to which it would be admissible to carry the principle of resistance.

"As to the latter consideration," observed Marshall, "that must be left entirely for yourself to determine: all that I am authorized to say is, that the company never felt the same degree of anxiety about any other cargo. If it be lost, we are knocked up for the whole season at least; if it be saved, we shall all be in clover."

"That is," answered Amos, "neither life nor limb must be considered, so that the goods are not lost. Very well, Marshall; you may go; and if you have any opportunity of communicating with our secret partners in the course of the day, you may tell them that either their prize shall be brought safe to shore, or my carcass shall be left to fatten the crows in Romney Marsh."

"Then there is no fear as to the result," said Marshall, rising and preparing to withdraw.

"Won't you stay and have some supper with us?" demanded Amos. But this the other

Marshall, this is a wretched state of existence. Pray, pray let it come to an end soon. I cannot much longer answer for my own self-command, or for the consequences of his inquiries: he sees how ill I look, and he has begun already to question me on the subject."

"And what then, love?" replied Marshall, soothingly. "You don't fancy that it will ever enter into his head to suspect the truth? And if he did, could he with any justice upbraid you,—he who has set you such an example, and continues to set it?"

"Perhaps so," answered Charlotte; "and yet I do not think it is either delicate or generous in you to cast my mother's frailties in my teeth. She was a poor uneducated girl when my father did her wrong. I ought to have known better, and did know better, though I have erred even as she did. But that is not what I wanted to say to you. I tell you that I am miserable. It may be in your eyes an unkind determination, but so wretched am I, that I had wellnigh to-night told him all, and I cannot undertake to keep the secret many days longer. Judge, therefore, for yourself, whether it will be best for you to come forward openly in your true character, and so to fulfil your promises under his sanction; or that I should

show him how frail his child has been, and how cruelly his friend has taken advantage of her weakness."

"Have I not told you, Charlotte, more than once already, that considerations of the most urgent kind alone keep me from speaking to your father on the subject? Cannot you have a little patience. You know that I am not what to the people of Waltham I seem to be. There is gentle—ay, noble blood in these veins, which will not indeed be dishonoured by my union with one so beautiful, but which renders it necessary that I should, for your sake, see my way clearly before I take a step that cannot be recalled. Is it fair, is it generous in you, to exhibit such distrust in one who has never given you cause?"

"I do not mistrust you, Marshall—God forbid that I should,—for, if I did, I would be the most heart-broken of creatures. But have some thought for my case, too, I entreat you; do not expose me to the world's scorn,—do not subject me to be thrust with contempt from beneath my father's roof."

"Fear nothing of the sort, dear girl," replied he; "your father will leave this to-morrow, to return probably the day after. He goes on an affair of the most vital importance; and when

he returns, if I am not, as I hope I shall be, in a condition to avow the footing on which we stand towards one another, at all events I shall put things in such a train as to clear off many difficulties. Be content, then, for eight-and-forty hours more: it is not a very protracted period to give to one who will make cheerfully such sacrifices on your account as few women would have a right to expect, and fewer still possess power to exact. You will give me eight-and-forty hours?"

"Ah! so it always is, Marshall. Eight-and-forty, and eight-and-forty, and eight-and-forty hours continually, till the poor dupe becomes at last an object at which Scorn may point her finger, and then the sooner she withdraws into a dark corner to die the better."

"Now Charlotte, dearest Charlotte, if I did not love as man never loved before, do you imagine that I could or would endure the language of reproach with which, whenever we now meet, you overwhelm me. Have you not read and heard enough to know that love, if it be not trusted, soon grows cold."

"I know not, Marshall, how that may be. But how is it—how can it be, when on one side everything has been sacrificed, on the other nothing?"

"Nay, nay, never say that. What was it that brought me here at all? Have I not told you how I was struck, while accidentally passing through the village, by beholding a creature beautiful as an angel; how I delayed my journey, ascertained who that angel was, conceived and carried into execution the scheme, romantic if you please, yet to me full of exquisite associations, which reduced me, for a time, to the rank of a village tradesman, and by so doing made me master of your affections? I admit that you have made sacrifices for me; but so the world would say have I made for you also. Yet I do not grudge them. Why should you grudge what in the end will prove to be no sacrifice at all, but a mere act of confidence, which cannot fail of endearing you to its object so long as life shall last? Nay, nay, Charlotte, never apply to me again the language of reproach; rather confide in me, as you have done, and believe that you shall have no cause to repent it."

"May God grant it!" sighed the poor girl. "But tell me, Marshall, when will these midnight excursions of my father end?"

"As soon as the important treaty which I am appointed to carry on, and in conducting which he displays so much skill and address,

shall be completed. It would not surprise me if he were to bring matters to-morrow to such a bearing as will enable me, by resuming my own character, to win the approbation of a grateful country, and place you in a position worthy of your beauty and your wit."

"And with whom are these treaties carried on?"

"You would not have me reveal secrets of state even to you, dear girl. Charlotte would despise her Palmerston—her—her—Marshall, if he were even for her gratification to betray the trust which his sovereign had reposed in him."

"Palmerston!" exclaimed Charlotte eagerly!—"gracious heavens! you cannot be Lord Palmerston!"

Marshall started—his hand shook as he grasped hers, and he exhibited other palpable tokens of embarrassment. "In the name of God!" he exclaimed, "how came you to make that discovery? I mean—I mean, how came you to fancy such a thing? No, dear girl, I am not Lord Palmerston; to you I am as yet no more than Marshall the grocer—and to others, at least in Waltham, I never shall be more. Therefore, groundless as the idea is, never, as you value my peace, breathe

a word of your suspicions to a living soul ; but take me as I am, your own most true, most devoted, most faithful Marshall, who, whether in a high or a low station, will never forsake one bound to him by such ties as the great world knows not."

"Nay, but you called yourself Palmerston—you are Palmerston—you are Lord Palmerton; and I—oh! fallen, degraded, miserable girl!—how can I presume to hope that one so far exalted above me will waste one thought upon the heart that must and will break when it is left to its shame and to its sorrow?"

"Dearest Charlotte," exclaimed her companion, throwing his arm round her waist, "be my rank what it may, you shall never be deserted. All that I ask of you is patience: trust me, confide in me, leave me to work my way through the difficulties and perplexities that surround me, and be assured that the first use that I make of the freedom for which I now struggle will be to lay my title and fortune at your feet. How will the high-born dames burst with envy when I lead my sweet village bride among them! Their faded forms, their haggard cheeks, what a contrast will they present to the native beauties of my own gentle girl! And when those raven locks are tied

up with strings of pearl, and a coronet of diamonds glitters over them, Charlotte herself will scarcely believe that she is the same modest and retiring creature that used to blush from beneath a new bonnet because 'it was new, and eyes that saw her, and her only, sparkled at her confusion. Will not those be happy times, love?"

"Oh, no, no, no! Be Marshall still—my own Marshall, moving in a station to which I have been accustomed, associating with people that will not look down upon me;—be Marshall, and make me Marshall's bride; and the coronet and the bands of pearl I will give to those that value them, for in my eyes they have no value."

"Beautiful in thy distrust, not less beautiful when confiding, I know not when I am bound to love thee most. But be content, Charlotte, with this,—that your fate is now so closely linked with mine, that no power under heaven can henceforth disunite them. Believe me, too, that to me rank, station, wealth, with all the pomp and splendour they bring in their train, have no real charms. I spoke of them with apparent fondness, because, judging of you from what I know of the rest of your sex, I concluded that the prospect of sharing these things

with the man of your choice would add to your happiness. But if to you it be distasteful to enter into the great world, here, as Marshall the grocer, I am content to live; and here, as Marshall the grocer, will I die. Can I say more to satisfy you of the extent of my love, or to draw you into a confession that you entertain no distrust of my honour?"

"And I do not, I do not distrust you, Marshall! No, you are everything to me; and if to you I have made what others may call a sacrifice, believe me that neither now do I repent, nor shall I repent it hereafter. Only for my sake, dearest, bring these harassing negotiations to an end, and let me be with you openly at all hours, and under all circumstances, as one worthy of your respect not less than of your love, because commanding the respect of the world. For your sake, equally with my own, I ask this; because the time may come, when these beauties have lost their influence, that the memory of shame will operate upon you even more keenly than upon me; and to have my husband blush when he spoke of the first days of our wedded life, I could not look upon that and survive it."

"Nor shall you, best beloved," replied Marshall, imprinting a kiss upon her cheek: "once

let me settle this pressing affair, and all that you desire shall be accomplished. Meanwhile the night wears apace, and it may be prudent to return, lest your absence excite suspicion."

He led her back, resigned if not cheerful, as far as the gate that opened into the court, and then, after a second embrace, left her. She turned round in the middle of the court to watch his receding steps. They were light and rapid; and her heart sank within her as the thought crossed her mind that they sounded like those of a man who rejoices in the accomplishment of some favourite project. Poor girl! how would that heart have shivered into atoms had she overheard the brief but triumphant sentence to which he involuntarily gave utterance: "Oh, rare specimen of the romantic and the tender! rare example of woman's fondness and woman's vanity! A lord, nobody but a lord will content her. No doubt her brow would well become a coronet, if coronets fell from heaven in every shower; but, as it is, she must go without. Ha! ha! ha! I did not think it was possible to carry the thing this length. By heavens, I am but a learner in human nature after all, when I fancied that I was fit to teach."

CHAPTER V.

REFLECTION.

MR. AMOS had rung the bell several times during Charlotte's absence, and not finding her within call, had become fretful and angry. His mode of saluting her, therefore, when she entered the parlour, was not of the most conciliatory kind. But when he saw that the colour was restored to her cheek, and that she seemed cheerful even under his reproofs, his anger soon melted away.

"Ah, now you look something like yourself, Letty!" he at length said, while an expression of great kindness brightened in his eye. "What have you been about, puss, to bring back so suddenly the bloom that I had begun to fear would never return?"

"Only been out walking in the starlight, papa," answered she: "your stars are great restorers of female beauty, you know."

"Well, well, come and sit down beside me,"

continued he; "or rather, go and call your mother: I am afraid that I was too hard upon her, and I would not spend this evening otherwise than in comfort with my family."

Charlotte ran to obey this order, and returned almost immediately with her mother, who came, as the pointer comes that is accustomed to be beaten much more frequently than caressed, not knowing how to take the kindnesses of one whom she feared even when his endearments were most tender. She drew her chair, however, within the circle; and Mr. Amos being supplied with his pipe and a tumbler of punch, the little group presented for a while the appearance of an affectionate and therefore a happy family. But where there is a consciousness of moral degradation in the mind, though there may be momentary gleams even of domestic pleasure, there never has been, and there never will be, anything approaching to happiness. In the present instance, for example, irritation, perhaps remorse, soon broke in to disturb the tranquillity of the circle. Amos replied sharply to one or two remarks, by which his housekeeper desired to indicate her anxiety as to his welfare, and her great wish that he would go less frequently from home; while the colour that had brightened

Charlotte's cheek when she first returned from her walk faded completely, and she became as pale and as haggard as before. Her father gazed at her tenderly, and, as if softened by the spectacle, laid aside his pipe.

"If fortune favour me this trip, Letty," said he, "you and I must have a thorough explanation as to the cause of your dejection. I have seen it coming on these several weeks, and whether it arise from bodily sickness, or from the still more fatal sickness of the mind, I am determined that I shall get to the bottom of it. I say, mother," he continued, turning to his housekeeper, "have you given Mr. Holtum a hint of this? If not, I desire that he may be called in to-morrow; the child will otherwise go into a decline."

"No fear, papa—no fear of that. Once let me see you safe back again from the business, whatever it may be, that takes you from us to-morrow, and my health will return, because my mind will be at ease. Is it not enough to make the whole family fret to death, to find you harassed as you have been of late, nobody can tell why?"

"You cannot wish for an end of that worry more earnestly than I do. I trust, however, that it will end soon; and yet, God knows, it

may end fatally enough for me, and of course for you too, Letty."

"Don't speak so sadly, papa; otherwise I shall believe that there really is danger. Troublesome I know your business is, and delicate; but if *you* talk gloomily about it, we may indeed fear the worst."

"I don't talk gloomily, child—I am never gloomy: only, I can't tell why, there is a weight upon my spirits to-night such as no exertion enables me to shake off. Sing me a song, love,—a sweet, melancholy song; it may dispel the cloud that has resisted conversation."

Charlotte sat down at once to her instrument, and sang with great feeling, if with imperfect skill, such a ballad as she knew that her father admired. It was a plaintive national air, little likely to command attention in a London concert-room perhaps, but highly relished amid the more natural atmosphere of a Kentish village. Still, it did not affect her father as it used to do; so she tried another and a livelier strain. He listened, but evidently without being moved, for his gaze was still bent anxiously upon the fire, and he smoked like one buried in profound thought.

"What! won't that do neither, papa?" cried Charlotte. "Well, then, we will try——"

"No more, love, no more to-night : it won't do, I perceive ; neither is it worth while to keep you up, when it is easy to see that you stand sorely in need of rest. Good night, love,—go to bed ; and you, too, mother, leave me. I have some business to arrange before I lie down, and as I must be up betimes in the morning, the sooner I set about it the better."

The two females, accustomed to treat every word from the speaker as law, made immediate preparations to obey. Charlotte closed the piano with a sigh, and was following her mother, who had already retired, when her father called her back.

"God knows, Charlotte, whether I have been right or wrong all this while," said he, holding her in his arms, and kissing her beautiful pale forehead ; "I cannot account for this weakness, but there is an impression on my mind that I have not dealt fairly by you, nor by your mother, nor by myself, nor by—by—by my Maker. What if the Bible should be true, after all?—why, then I am—no matter what. Do you ever pray, love ? I never taught you to pray, to be sure,—but do you pray?"

"To whom ought I to pray, papa?" replied she, looking earnestly in his face. "I never heard you pray even to the great Creator ; and

in France I saw them pray to saints and angels. I do not pray, papa—I do not know a prayer.”

“Then learn one without delay, Charlotte; and be sure to introduce into it a petition for your father. Pray that in the opinions which he has all his life held he may be right; or if wrong, that some sign may be granted to him, such as shall convince his understanding and soften his heart; pray that he may find mercy if he should need it, or else that there may be no tribunal before which he shall be required to stand; pray that the troubled waters of his own thoughts may become smoother; pray that he may have strength to wrestle with his own pride, with his own obstinacy, with his own foul, foul, humours; pray—”

“You are ill, papa,” cried the astonished girl, as she watched the working of his troubled countenance: “I never saw you look as you do now—I never heard you talk as you are now talking.”

—“I am ill—ill indeed, Charlotte,” cried Amos, loosing her from his embrace and striding across the room; “but my sickness is not of the body. No; there is a disease that rangles more, a thousand times more, than your fever’s heat or your ague’s chill—the disease of a mind dissatisfied with itself—of a conscience awakened, yet finding no place of refuge to flee

to. What an account must mine be, if such accounts are taken! And you—what will be your fate, provided I be removed from you? Without a name, without a station—bastards—beggars—outcasts! Oh, my God! pardon! pardon! pardon!”

The wretched man stopped as he gave utterance to the last exclamation, and leaning against the wall of the room, permitted his head to sink lower and lower at each repetition of the word “pardon,” till he had become almost double. His daughter ran towards him, and flinging her arms round his neck, moistened his cheek with her tears.

“Look up, papa; for my sake, look up! What can all this mean? You, whom no real dangers ever alarmed—who bore up under the misfortune of the fire—who set an example, during the disturbances, of courage and coolness to your neighbours—you to be thus unmanned! This must have reference to the business of to-morrow, or you are indeed ill—ill in body as well as mind.”

Charlotte spoke in no tone of reproach, neither did it in the most remote degree enter into her contemplation to upbraid her father for his seeming weakness; but the perverse spirit of the man fired up as he listened to her exclamations.

"Unmanned, child!" exclaimed he, raising his head and looking proudly upwards: "I am not unmanned; no power on earth, or above the earth, or below, will ever have to boast that it unmanned me! Be my opinions right, or be they wrong, they are mine; mine they always have been, and mine they shall be to the last. So that fit is over, you see, and, as the play-book has it, 'Richard is himself again!' And now, my dear, go to bed; sleep soundly, and dream of better days to come; for I tell you, that by this day week I expect so to have settled all my affairs, that we shall be able to take our pleasure wherever we choose, without caring for any one. Good night, good night!"

"Shall I try to pray, papa, for myself and for you?" asked she, timidly.

"Pray, child?—no, to be sure not; what good comes of praying? Go and sleep: I take it, people lie down not to pray, but to rest and be fit for their work on the morrow. Take my blessing with you and go."

Once more he kissed her forehead, laying at the same time his hand upon her head. But there was now little of solemnity either in his tone or gestures; on the contrary, his features had resumed their usual stern expression; the hand that rested on her brow was firm, and

his whole bearing was that of a man who having made a violent effort to control himself had succeeded. Charlotte accordingly quitted the room; and he, after an hour spent in adjusting some private business, followed her example and lay down.

It was still profoundly dark when Amos, whose slumbers had been brief and broken, quitted his bed. A light was soon struck, by means of which he ascertained that the clock had just gone three; and congratulating himself on his good fortune in awaking thus early, he made haste to complete his toilet. Not under any circumstances was that operation with him one either of nicety or of long continuance, nor on the present occasion did he trouble himself to protract it. On the adjustment of his great-coat alone, indeed—a huge, shaggy, weather-tight wrapper—were any pains bestowed, and these aimed rather at convenience than appearance. Having taken from a drawer a brace of double-barreled pistols, he first of all ascertained that they were charged, and then deposited one in each of the side-pockets. He next flung the garment over him, buttoned it up, ascertained that the weapons made no show, and shifted them about and about till they ceased to tell tales; and lastly, buckling on his spurs and

"though pleasant for the season. You are travellers betimes, like myself, if, as I take it is the case, you have ridden a stage before breakfast."

"We have just alighted," replied one of the strangers, "and have this moment ordered a rasher to be fried for us: there is no reason why you should not join us if you be disposed. We will have the small table brought in here, and eat our breakfast more comfortably over the fire than at a distance from it."

Amos readily consented; and the rasher, with bread, butter, beer, and other viands, being produced, the three ate like men who lacked no appetite, and were not very nice as to the means of allaying it. When the meal was somewhat advanced, they began, as is customary under like circumstances, to beat about, rather than ask questions respecting one another's business.

"We are for the coast," said one of the strangers; "and, if we find the means handy, shall probably cross the water before dark. Whither may you be bound, friend, and on what business?"

"I am going to attend a market at Ashford," replied Amos; "though I may go a little farther than that, too, for I have some

friends in the Marsh, and being so near, I shall probably be tempted to pay them a visit. If you be for the coast, about Dover or even Folkstone, we don't go the same road, I am afraid."

"We are not very particular what road we follow," answered the stranger; "indeed, all this country is so new to us, that we should like to see a little more of it. Probably it is familiar to you, and therefore, if you be willing, you can act as our guide without difficulty."

"May I ask the nature of your business over the water?" observed Amos.

"Nothing very particular," said the stranger; "as much curiosity as anything else. Yet they tell me the people of Calais and Rochelle do a little business now and then too. Is it so?"

"Can't tell, indeed," replied Amos, looking attentively at the speaker. "If by doing business, you mean smuggling, I should think the Coast-blockade had pretty well put a stop to that."

"They say not," answered the stranger: "I am told that as much is done in that way as ever; indeed, I have heard that more is done, and on a greater scale."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Amos.

"Oh, they tell me that some of the most respectable houses in London are concerned; and that men lend a hand whom nobody would suspect of such a thing."

"I should doubt that," answered Amos, observing by a sudden flash of his eye that both strangers were examining his features very closely. "I have no faith in idle stories of that sort; they are easily got up, but generally hard to prove."

"Maybe," said the stranger, rising, and laying hold of Amos's great-coat, as if he had mistaken it for his own. "But it is time, Bill, that we were jogging."

"I'll trouble you, friend," cried Amos, "to drop that coat: it don't belong to you."

"God bless me! no more it does," answered the stranger, while his hand passed over the butt of one of the pistols; "I might have known that from the contents of the pockets."

"I always ride armed when I carry money about me," said Amos, taking his coat, and placing it beside him; "and I don't think I should be very scrupulous in using my weapons, if need were."

"Quite right," replied the stranger. "However, as we are not going the same way, we

must wish you good morning." So saying, he paid the bill for himself and his companion, and Amos in a few minutes afterwards saw them mount their horses and quit the inn door.

CHAPTER VI.

NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

WHEN Amos, after resting an hour to refresh his steed, found himself again pursuing his journey and alone, his thoughts reverted in some degree involuntarily to the men with whom he had breakfasted. He could not say that he had observed about them anything which ought to excite suspicion, though he felt that suspicion did, for some reason or another, attach to them. What could they be doing there if, as they asserted, France was their object? Unless they had come across the country, a circumstance which their appearance by no means indicated, the Wheel lay decidedly out of their way; nor were they at all like men whose habit it was to frequent such houses of public accommodation. And that was not all: they first talked of being so ignorant of the bearing of the localities as to stand in need of a guide; and then, after asking some very

impertinent questions, rode off, without waiting to ascertain whether he would undertake the office which they had proposed to him. But, above all, the manner in which one of them took up and examined his great-coat. "D—n them!" said Amos at length, "if this were the age of highwaymen, I should say they belonged to the fraternity. But whatever they may be, it will be as well for themselves not to cross my path unnecessarily; for, deuce take me if I scruple to give them the contents of the implements which one of them at least seemed so anxious to examine."

Having come to this conclusion, Amos jogged on; his way lying first through an undulating country, of which the soil was cold and poor, though the general appearance was beautiful, and then along the brow of a broad hill, a portion of which was feathered with underwood, while the rest was open pasturage. It had, upon the whole, a continual ascent; on gaining the extreme ridge of which he pulled up for a moment and looked round. Beneath his feet lay an extensive plain, of which the boundary was formed on one side by the channel, on another by the horizon, on a third by a second range of chalky downs, similar to that from which he gazed, but far more magnifi-

cently wooded. Towns, villages, gentlemen's seats, with farms, scattered here and there at short intervals, fenced in and intersected by groves and hedge-rows, gave to the panorama, even in winter, an air of singular richness, which there needed but the green leaf on the bough, and the hop-garden in its pride of beauty, to render complete. Far off in the distance, moreover, were seen the white sails of several vessels which, taking advantage of the light breeze that blew, now pursued their voyage; and as the sun shone brightly, both they and the waters under their keels bore the exact tint which the painter loves to catch when it is his object to represent old Ocean in a gentle humour. It was indeed a splendid scene,—so splendid, indeed, as to excite admiration even in the breast of Amos, making him forget for the moment both the speculations in which he had recently indulged, and the business upon which he was soon going to enter.

Having indulged a feeling which was not very usual with him as long as he judged it expedient to do so, Amos again put his horse in motion,—restraining the spirit of the animal, however, which seemed unconscious of fatigue, and moving forward only at a foot's pace. It was not his object to reach Warehorn much

before dark ; and so completely had he taken Time by the forelock, that as yet noon was barely passed. Gently, therefore, he descended the hill, and gently pursued his route, till the fine old tower of Ashford church uprose before him, and he found himself beside the arched gateway that leads into the yard of one of the most comfortable and best managed inns in the county—the Saracen's Head. He turned immediately to his right, and was in the act of giving the bridle to an hostler, when, to his great surprise, he beheld his companions at the Wheel lounging beside the door of one of the stables. The recognition was mutual ; neither did the strangers seem averse to renew the acquaintance of the morning ; they approached him, and he who had been the spokesman on a previous occasion spoke again now with a smile.

“ We seem to be hunting one another, friend : I think we might have managed the thing better, and had the benefit 'of each other's company, by which *we* should have been greatly the gainers ; for I doubt whether *you* will much profit by your trip, as this turns out not to be market-day at Ashford after all.”

“ So it seems,” replied Amos with great composure ; “ and yet I don't think I shall be the

only loser by the adventure. Gentlemen bound for France will find that in going round by Ashford they have wasted time and money, both of which are of great value to most men."

"Very little to us, though," answered the stranger: "for, as I told you at the Wheel, ours is an excursion of pleasure as much as of profit. However, we have just ordered a chop, which will be ready in half an hour; and if you are disposed to give us your company, we shall be very glad to share it with you, as we did our rasher in the morning."

Amos, who was by no means delighted at this second rencounter, experienced very little disposition to cultivate the strangers' acquaintance; yet the overstrained prudence which induces men engaged in unlawful undertakings to affect an openness which under different circumstances they would probably not experience, operated with him so far that he closed with the proposition. Having desired his horse to be dressed and fed, and given notice that he might be required again in an hour and a half, he accompanied the strangers into the house, where, in a snug parlour, within the grate of which a cheerful fire was blazing, he found a table laid out for three.

"Are we to have any addition to our party?" asked he.

"Oh no," replied the stranger; "you are the only guest we expect; and we have expected you ever since, after losing our way, we found ourselves in the neighbourhood of this inn. You told us, you will recollect, that Ashford was your point: ours was then Dover; but we took a wrong turn somewhere among the Downs, and did not discover our mistake till it was too late. We then determined to have your company to dinner whenever you should arrive, provided the arrangement were agreeable to yourself."

Amos examined the speaker more closely than he had done in the morning, without, however, permitting the faintest appearance of anxiety to pervade his own countenance or manner. He was a tall, muscular, raw-boned man, with a fair complexion and sandy-coloured hair, an expression of perfect coolness, but the most determined resolution in his eye, and manifestly capable of attempting most things which strength and activity can accomplish. It appeared, moreover, to Amos, that his accent was not Kentish. It was broader, fuller, and, in the pronunciation of certain words, more un-

couth, than the middling classes are accustomed to use in Kent; and it was totally free from Cockneyisms. Without taking any notice of the stranger's civility, therefore, further than by thanking him for it, Amos at once taxed him with being the native of a different county.

"You are quite right," answered the stranger; "I have not the honour to be a Kentish man—or, I beg your pardon, a man of Kent—for that, I presume, is the designation here. But I have spent a considerable portion of my life in the county; and I must say, that he is very hard to please who would not be content to pass his life there."

"Are you in business?"

"I can hardly say either that I am or am not," replied the stranger. "A settled business, such as you own, for example, I certainly do not follow; but I do not object to undertake a job if it come in my way, and happen to suit my fancy."

"And in what line, if I may be so bold as to ask?"

"Oh, hang it! I am not particular. Any little odd or end; but if I had a choice, I should certainly prefer the trade that is freest from trammels."

"It would be a hard matter to determine that point," replied Amos, coolly. "All kinds of business are, now-a-days, so trammelled—or rather, so burthened with expenses and restrictions, that to choose among them one from which to get a fair profit will puzzle you, I take it, or any other man besides. To be sure, I cannot answer for more than agriculture; but if you can live at all, I advise you not to burn your fingers by trying that."

"I don't know," answered the stranger. "Your agriculturist seems to me to have a pretty good command of his own time, at all events; and if a man have time, with ever so small a share of wit, the deuce is in it if he can't find ways and means to improve it. I dare say that you, now, don't confine your attention exclusively to agriculture?"

"I should like to know what a man like me could turn his hand to, apart from the business in which he was brought up?"

"Nay, that I cannot speak for. All that I meant to insinuate was, that a person of your sharpness must either find his farming business answer, or he will look about for some second string wherewith to furnish his bow and shoot an arrow."

"And may I venture to ask," demanded

Amos, "how your companion, the silent gentleman there, employs himself?"

"He's my partner," answered the stranger, laughing. "He's like Tom in the play; when the master calls 'John, John, what are you doing?' and John says, 'Nothing;'—and then comes 'Tom, Tom, what are you about?' 'Helping John, sir.'"

"I hope *you* find *your* business profitable, gentlemen," said Amos, becoming, he scarce knew why, both uneasy and irritable. "If a command of time and a little wit be all that men need to make their fortunes, you seem to have plenty of the first at your disposal, with a fair share of the last."

"Well, here comes dinner," said the stranger, as the waiter entered with a smoking joint of mutton; "and if your appetite be like mine, the thought of much business or little, or great profits or small, will not interfere with the discussion of that. Shall I help you?"

The three casual acquaintances soon satisfied one another that, whatever might be their differences of opinion on other matters, they were equally agreed to lay in a good stock both of solids and liquids. It was marvellous to behold how they kept pace with one another; the trencher of each returning for a fresh supply as

soon as that of his companion was loaded; while a bottle of sherry, together with sundry pints of brown stout, disappeared with incredible rapidity. Then followed the tass of brandy with which, on such occasions and in such company, the meal is usually completed.

"This tastes of the right sort," observed the stranger, permitting the liquor to pass slowly over his tongue: "this never paid the King's duty, or I much mistake. It has the true salt-water smack; it does one's heart good."

"I am not skilled in these matters," said Amos; "but to my taste it very much resembles what you may purchase any day at the store of every dealer in London or Canterbury."

"Well, devil take me!" continued the stranger, "if I understand how men can be so foolish as pay a duty of two hundred per cent. when they can get an article so much better without. For my part, I hate all restrictions on trade so cordially, that, upon principle, I would always patronise the smuggler, if I knew where to find him, even if I ran some risks in doing so."

"You are bold in language before a stranger, friend," observed Amos, not in the slightest degree tempted to adopt the same tone. "What-

ever I thought, I should be more cautious, were I in your place, how I spoke ; unless, indeed, it be with you as with many more, who speak without acting."

The stranger cast a quick but piercing glance towards Amos, and their eyes fairly met for the first time since their acquaintance began. Both were resolute men, and each saw that the other, whatever he might think, was not likely to betray himself unnecessarily, either by word or gesture. The stranger, therefore, permitted his features to relax into a smile, while he commended the prudence of his companion, and made light of the opposite quality in himself. It seemed, however, as if he were again in a hurry ; for without waiting for the bottle of port which they had talked of discussing after the cloth was withdrawn, he observed to his partner, that time wore apace, and that they must endeavour to make up for the blunder of the morning by getting on a stage in the right way before dark. "You, I suppose," continued he, addressing himself to Amos, "mean to adhere to your determination of visiting your friends in the Marsh : as there is no market here, indeed you could not do better." "That I must determine for myself," replied

Amos, coldly : " these are monstrous snug quarters, and the gathering clouds seem to indicate that it will be prudent to keep under cover when one has found it."

" Ah, well, you will of course do as you see best ; but we must go."

The stranger here having desired the bill to be brought in, paid two-thirds of the reckoning, and immediately quitted the room ; and, by the clank of horses' hoofs ringing in the paved court-yard, Amos soon ascertained that he was gone.

" Now, hang me if I know what to make of that fellow !" said he. " That he is not what he would have me believe, is quite certain ; for he has no mark of your genuine free-trader about him ; neither can I swallow the notion that he is moving about for his own amusement. And what brought him here ? There is a mystery in the case which, if I had more time at my command, I should like exceedingly to solve. However, that is quite out of the question : I have work enough to do of my own, and it is high time to set about it."

So saying, he rose, and having discharged his reckoning, ordered his horse. The noble animal was brought round accordingly ; but just as Amos was preparing to mount, the

hostler gave him notice that the horse had cast a shoe.

"That's impossible!" said Amos; "he was shod only two days ago, and the road I passed was so rough, that if he had gone barefoot even for twenty yards, I must have felt it."

"I can't tell nought about that, sir," replied the man; "but the shoe of his near fore foot is gone, I am quite certain."

Amos looked, and the case was as the hostler had described. The appearance of the hoof, likewise, plainly denoted that it could not have been bare any length of time, nor yet come much in contact with the hard soil since its covering was lost.

"This is one of the strangest occurrences that ever befel me," said he aloud; "but it can't be helped now. You have a smith close at hand, I suppose?—take the beast to the forge, and get him shod without delay: and mark me,—cause the smith to examine the rest of the feet minutely, that I may not find myself run aground again at a moment when I fancied myself in deep water."

The man obeyed, while Amos, returning to his little parlour, did his best to amuse an anxiety which stole upon him he knew not how, by ordering a glass of warm punch, which

was consumed, together with a second, ere the farrier had completed his operations. As soon, however, as the horse was brought round, he mounted, and in five minutes was beyond the town, and traversing the narrow causeway that leads towards Romney Marsh.

The clock struck three as Amos guided his horse's head round the corner of the Royal Oak; he had thus little more than a single hour of daylight before him, and he knew that the leaders of his company were to assemble at the Swan as soon after dark as possible. This was not, therefore, a time for sparing Rattler, however willing he might be to carry him in fresh for the night; so he shook the noble animal's bridle, and he bounded along again as if he were just loosened from his own stall. Rapidly, therefore, the town faded into distance; the meadows that girdle in the town were traversed; the bridge was passed, and left behind; and the wild woody country that skirts the edge of the Marsh was entered. Amos arrived, indeed, within a couple of miles of Warehorn, and had begun anxiously to consider the projected enterprise, when, amid the fading light, the figures of two horsemen became visible, jogging along at a leisurely pace in his front. At first he checked his own

horse, hoping that as there was not much of road to traverse, they might get so far ahead as to render his passing them unnecessary; but a moment's consideration showed him that nothing could come of that scheme. He accordingly pushed on again, and in a few moments found himself close in their rear. They separated to the right and left, looking back at the same time.

"Well overtaken again, fellow traveller," said the same stranger who had annoyed him with his company at the Wheel and the Saracen's Head: "this is a piece of good luck which we had no right to anticipate. We are zig-zag sort of voyagers, you see; but since our eccentric movements bring us into such excellent company, I don't think it would be civil to complain of them. You mean to halt for the night at Warehorn, I presume?"

"I don't suppose it can matter much to you where I halt for the night," replied Amos, thrown completely off his guard by the feelings of anger and suspicion which this unexpected meeting called into play. "As far as my tastes are concerned, we had enough of one another's company for one day, at all events; so, if it be all the same to you, I would as soon we rode separate."

"Nay, nay, friend," answered the stranger, keeping his horse at the same pace with that of Amos; "I do think that, in a wild country like this, company cannot fail of being agreeable to all honest men. For my part, being entirely at a loss where to put up, I will feel exceedingly indebted to you if you will direct me."

"Put up under that ditch, or in it!" answered Amos fiercely, reining in his horse, and making him stand stock still. "You seem to have been dogging me all day long, for what purpose I know not; but curse me if I bear with impertinent curiosity from you or any man! What do you want?"

"Nothing in the world, my good friend," replied the other with the most provoking coolness, "except good company. But, if you don't choose to give us that, of course we can't help it. I wish you good-night."

The strangers rode forward as the speaker uttered these words; and Amos, who pursued his journey at a foot's pace, soon lost the sound of their horses' hoofs. He then resumed his trot, and in half an hour had arrived at the Swan at Ham-street.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RESULT OF NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

"Has anybody arrived yet, Joe?" said he to the man who took his horse.

"Only two strange gentlemen," replied the hostler, "that came just before yourself, sir."

"The devil! And what have you done with them?"

"Their beasts are in the stable; they themselves in the little parlour, where they have ordered supper in two hours' time."

"I wish to G— you had told them there was no room. How could you be so thoughtless, Joe? You knew I was coming here to-night; and there, you have given them the only room in which it was possible for me to transact my business."

"It wasn't I that took them in: but if it had been, they were so pressing that I couldn't have refused them. They would take no denial."

“And what’s to be done now? Is anybody else here?”

“Bill Blowhard and Jack Castaway was here, sir; but they’re gone out. They said they would be back again, however, in an hour, and it’s nearly gone now.”

“Well, then, be sure you give me warning when they come; and look ye, Joe, let’s have the stable clear, at all events. I suppose I must put up with the tap in the mean while.”

Amos turned away as he said this, and made for the house; but his tormentors seemed resolute in defeating his plans as soon as he had formed them. He was scarcely within the door of the public-house, when his talkative friend met him, and, without appearing to recollect that they had differed in opinion by the way, addressed him in the same easy tone which he had assumed throughout.

“This is indeed being more fortunate than we had any right to expect,” said he. “I understood that you were going to visit a friend in the Marsh; but your horse, I suppose, was knocked up, or you found yourself later than you expected to be? However, we are the gainers, at all events; for there seems to be but one parlour in the house, and of course

you will join us at supper, as you did at breakfast and dinner?"

"Friend," said Amos, coldly but firmly, "there are certain bounds beyond which civility cannot go without becoming impertinence. Chance threw us together only a few hours since, and I have no particular inclination to patch up an intimacy on such short notice. So, with your leave, I had rather sup by myself, let me get it where I may."

"We will meet after supper then," said the stranger.

"No; neither shall we meet after supper."

"Ah, but we will though," said the other gaily, as he passed on, and walked out into the village.

"Now the devil take your assurance!" muttered Amos to himself, as he entered the tap-room, in a corner of which next the fire he sat down. But he had not long kept his station there, ere the hostler called him, and he sallied forth, ostensibly for the purpose of seeing his horse fed.

Amos followed the man towards the stable, beside which he could perceive, through the gloom, the outlines of two men. They answered his private signal; so, taking the dark lantern from Joe's hand, he approached,

and the three entered the stable together. The conference was brief, but very much to the purpose. Amos ascertained that the party was within call; that the workers amounted to forty-five, the fighters to eighteen: of these latter, twelve carried fowling-pieces, the rest were batsmen; and the whole, as his informants assured him, could be relied upon under any circumstances. Considering the reported value of the cargo to be run, and the necessity under which they were laid of running it at all hazard, Amos could not but think that the numbers of armed men at his disposal were small. Still, as he had not as yet encountered any opposition except such as management and address sufficed to overcome, he was far from distrusting the result. He directed the constables to draw their people to a head at the Pair of Compasses, where they had more than once assembled already; and promising to join them there within two hours, he returned to the tap-room.

If Amos expected to undergo any further annoyance from the strangers, he was altogether deceived. For the full space of an hour, during which he occupied his seat by the fireside, they never came near him; and, strange to say, in exact proportion as they

appeared desirous of keeping aloof, his curiosity with respect to them received an impulse. He rang the bell, and demanded of the landlady what her strange guests were about.

"They walked out about an hour ago," said she, "and have not yet returned."

"But you expect them back?" said he.

"They ordered beds, sir," replied the hostess.

"Oh, very well—no matter; I must go out also for a while: but I will be back again in half an hour's time at the farthest; and should they return before I do, I will thank you to tell them so."

The landlady promised to do as she was bid; while Amos, passing quietly to the stable, began to saddle his horse.

"D—n me if I know what these sharks are up to," said the hostler, who joined him during the operation; "but they are gone, horses and all. I advise you to look out for squalls, if, as I suppose, you be up to trap to-night."

"By heavens! I have suspected as much for some time," said Amos. "Which way did the rascals go? And yet I can't think that, neither, unless there be some snake in the grass. I say," continued he, after a brief pause, "have you

anything that's good for close quarters? I never like to make a noise if I can help it, and should prefer one of your cut-and-come-again's, if I could get it."

"You shan't want for that," replied the hostler: "there's the sword master used to wear in the yeomanry thirty years ago; it's a monstrous good blade still, though the sheath be somewhat rusty;—shall I fetch it?"

Amos assented; and the weapon being brought, he drew it from its soiled scabbard, and saw that the edge was still keen, and the point fit for warlike purposes. It happened, moreover, that the belt was also within reach; so that, buckling on the whole affair, and concealing it within his coat, he felt, or fancied, that he was prepared for any emergency. Rattler was then led forth, free of limb and sound in wind as if he had just quitted his own stable, albeit the distance he had that day travelled could not fall short of five-and-forty miles. But Rattler was one of those noble quadrupeds whose powers of endurance seem to increase with the necessities that call for them, and which, whether distressed or not, will persevere in their work till they fairly break down under it. "Carry me well through this last affair, my boy," said Amos, as he

impediments were at length surmounted, and the beach lay before them. It was wide and irregular in its surface—flat here, broken into hill and dale there; affording, by such means, excellent cover for ambuscades; and never had people traversed it who knew better how to turn to account the advantages which it offered. Winding round the bases of these miniature mountains of shingle, Amos led his people to a position where, being within a hundred and fifty yards of high-water mark, they could lie down in comparative security; and there, by a whisper which passed from file to file with the utmost caution, they received orders to halt.

If the discipline of the gang during the advance thus far deserved unqualified commendation, their behaviour during the tedious hour throughout which they waited for the signal of action was not less admirable. Their chief had indeed taken care, during his conference with the constables, to give his instructions so that they could not be mistaken: the exact spot for the decoy-light was specified, and every other arrangement made which the circumstances of the case seemed to require. But neither skill in the leader, nor discipline among those that follow, is sufficient to control wind and tide, both of which, in such operations as that now in pro-

cess of accomplishment, are very important agents. Still, nothing could exceed the patience of all engaged, among whom not a murmur was heard, notwithstanding that the night grew more threatening as it wore apace, and wind and rain equally beat upon them.

"What can be the occasion of all this delay?" whispered one of the constables to Amos: "it is close upon midnight."

Amos was going to answer; but ere the first word could escape his lips, a blue light was burned at sea, and the signal passed quietly from rank to rank to look out.

The blue light flickered, wavered, streamed up, and expired. In an instant a flash from the point indicated by Amos to his signal-man answered it, and for a quarter of an hour all remained quiet. Meanwhile the gale, having freshened considerably, caused the sea to break with considerable violence on the beach, and the roar of waters became every instant more and more alarming.

"'Tis an unlucky night," whispered one of his lieutenants to Amos; "I wish they may be able to get over the surf!"

"They must try, anyhow," replied the captain; "and the sooner they do so now the better. Up with the rockets there!"

Whiz, whiz, went a couple of sky-rockets, at the interval of perhaps a second from one another; and whiz, whiz, went those from the boat in reply.

"She has drifted, by heavens!" exclaimed several voices at once; "she has gone to leeward terribly, and is now well opposite the decoy!"

"No matter, lads," cried Amos aloud; "now's your time—you haven't a moment to lose!"

Up sprang the company, with ropes, hooks, and all sorts of implements ready in their hands, and rushed forward. As they hurried along the shore, the outline of a lugger became every instant more perceptible, bounding over the water with the speed of a racehorse. Now she rode upon the dark deep sea; now she rose upon the crest of a wave; now she was among the breakers; and now, with a fierce hissing noise, her keel seemed to scrape the shingle—she reeled, rocked, bent forward, was uplifted again upon a mass of breakers, and sprang high upon the beach. Still she was within water-mark; for the spray broke over her gunwale in every direction, and her stern appeared with difficulty to resist the pressure of the tide. But neither Amos nor his men paused to watch the result:

in three minutes the fighters were scattered in skirmishing order along two lines, in the interval between which the workers made ready to ply their tasks, the foremost penetrating without hesitation up to their waists in the spray, and holding on by the edges of the lugger, to hinder themselves from being borne out to sea.

"Now, my boys, now," cried Amos, "give way—give way, or the cursed blockaders will be upon us, and we may lose all!"

Amos threw out this inducement to increased vigilance not without cause. Scarcely was the vessel grounded, ere flash went a pistol about a hundred yards from the scene of action; and well were those who saw it aware that it would soon draw thither ample reinforcements. The exertions of the smugglers were therefore more than human; but they availed not: before half the cargo had been run, the dark figures of men were seen hastening towards them, and a voice almost immediately called upon them in the King's name to surrender.

"Stand off, and be d—d!" answered Amos, "or take the consequence."

But the Coast-guard did not stand off; on the contrary, they continued to advance, and Amos gave the word "Fire!" Six guns were immediately discharged, and one of the Coast-

guard dropped. But his companions, instead of being intimidated, seemed only to have their fury increased by the event; they answered the fire with a volley of carbines, and rushed on to close quarters.

The Coast-blockade amounted in all to only eight persons; but they were well armed, led on by gallant officers, and knew that the law was on their side. The smugglers outnumbered them five to one; yet the consciousness that they fought with a halter round their necks seemed to unman them, and their very multitude caused confusion. Amos alone seemed cool and collected: he took no direct part in the fray—that is, he neither discharged a pistol nor struck a sword-stroke, but animating the combatants from time to time, directed his chief attention to the workers. These sedulously plied their tasks during the whole of the skirmish, and had carried off a larger portion of the goods, when a second body of the Coast-blockade falling upon them from the rear, threw all into the utmost dismay. Both fighters and workers now broke and fled. It was to no purpose that Amos, by voice and gesture, strove to detain them; they either heard him not, or hearing, paid no regard to him; and when, casting aside his great-coat, he

ran among the press, and seizing one after another by the collar, commanded them to rally, they extricated themselves from his grasp and ran the faster. A panic had fallen upon the whole gang. They threw from them bales of goods, casks, boxes—everything that threatened in any way to incommode them in their flight, and, without so much as pausing to ascertain by what amount of force they were followed, plunged into the Marshes and dispersed.

Maddened with rage, disappointment, and vexation, Amos heaped upon his recreant band every epithet of reproach or scorn to which his lips could give utterance. His next consideration was how to dispose of himself; for by this time he stood literally alone against a host of enemies. Brave he unquestionably was, but not insane; and so, perceiving how vain resistance would be, he likewise passed the first plank, and made for the Marshes. His pursuers, however, were at his heels. It seemed also as if they had been acquainted with the situation of that bridge, at all events; for before he had traversed half the meadow that lay beyond, they were close in his track. Forward he ran, therefore, with redoubled speed, expecting every moment to be saluted with a volley of musketry; but none came.

He reached the second ditch, which was both deep and wide, but reached it where no plank spanned it. He dashed to his right, fancying that he saw the heap of rushes beneath which it lay ; but his memory had failed him. No bridge was there ; while every instant the pursuers gained upon him, till their very footsteps on the turf caught his ear.

“Surrender, you miscreant !” shouted a voice of which, even in his present perilous situation, he thought that the tones were familiar to him. But he did not surrender. Another rush to the right—then a few paces backwards—then a race to the front, and a desperate leap carried him clear to the opposite side. Bang, bang, went a couple of carbines on the instant, the balls from which whistled past his ear ; but he sustained no wound, while the same voice, in a clear and a sonorous accent, prohibited a repetition of the fire. Amos, fancying himself comparatively safe, looked back : he saw some single object carried rapidly through the air, and was not long left in doubt as to the cause of the phenomenon ;—a solitary enemy had cleared the ditch by the same process that he had followed, and now sprang towards him.

Amos was very brave ; yet, hunted as he had been like a beast of prey, and alive to the dis-

advantages of his present situation, he would have willingly avoided another struggle, into which his pursuer seemed eager to force him. He continued his flight, therefore; but had compassed but a small space ere he discovered that the individual behind far surpassed him in speed of foot. His steps became more and more audible every instant—now his very breath was heard—and now a hand laid roughly on his shoulder convinced him that escape by flight was impossible. He shook off his adversary's grasp, and facing about, drew his sword and prepared to defend himself. The other hung back for an instant.

"I told you we should meet after supper," said he, in a tone which there was no possibility of mistaking; "and now I advise you to lay down your arms, and take your chance of mercy; for a prisoner you shall be this night, with a whole skin or a broken, just as you yourself may prefer."

"Is it you, most insolent?" cried Amos. "Thank God, I have you at last in the very situation which of all others I most longed for! You shall not force your company again on those that don't desire it."

"Do you see how easily I might settle this matter if I chose?" replied the stranger, pre-

sending a pistol at Amos as he was about to spring upon him. "But it is not your life I want—it is your person. So there, we are on equal terms, at all events."

As he said this, the officer threw his pistol on the ground and unsheathed a broadsword. It was dark, yet not so pitchy as to hinder each from observing the flash of the other's weapon as they closed in deadly and desperate strife. Both were strong, both active, both full of courage : youth and address were, however, on the side of the stranger, and they prevailed. After exchanging several cuts and thrusts without effect, the sword of his adversary passed through Amos's body, and he fell to the ground.

CHAPTER VIII

"Good night to Marmion."

"You have settled my business, whoever you may be," exclaimed the wounded man: "I'm done for, that's certain."

"I hope not," answered the stranger; "I hope that job is reserved for the hangman yet."

"Why are you so inveterate against me?" said Amos, while the blood trickled from his side and he laboured for breath. "What injury have I ever done to you, that you should thus taunt me in the very act of dying?"

"You, or your cursed gang, have killed a man to-night, to save the little finger of whose left hand, all your souls and bodies had been cheaply given. However, you shan't lie and bleed to death there."

The stranger ran back on concluding this sentence, leaving Amos alone, with the wretched conviction strong upon his mind that his

very hours were numbered, and so weakened already with the loss of blood that he retained his consciousness not without an exertion. He raised himself upon his elbow, and strove with his pocket-handkerchief to stanch the wound: but the exertion proved too much for him, and he fell back. Such was his condition when the Coast-guard, having discovered the plank-bridge, came up. They tore open his waistcoat, bound a handkerchief tight round his body, and making a sort of litter of one of their great-coats, laid him upon it, and in obedience to the orders of Amos's conqueror, who now put on his rightful character of an officer in the navy, conveyed him back to the Compasses. There he was almost immediately attended by the surgeon of the station, who dressed his wound, but who gave no hopes whatever of his surviving many days—if indeed he should live to see the morrow.

The remainder of that night was, as may be imagined, miserable enough to Amos. The surgeon had not, it is true, announced to himself that his recovery was hopeless; and the people who attended him were, upon the whole, as kind as under similar circumstances English men and women are apt to be. But when

the dread fiat has gone forth, there is usually a conviction on the mind which no exercise of reason, or even of hope, can blot out. Amos never expected to recover from the instant that he received his wound, and his thoughts ran continually upon what was to follow. The condition of his family preyed upon him; the memory of the strange fit of despondency to which he had been subjected previously to quitting Waltham came back upon him: he became excited, feverish, almost delirious, and utterly indifferent to what passed around him.

"Send for Charlotte, I pray you," said he to the woman who watched by his bedside: "let me see her once more before I die; her sweet voice will comfort me even here; and I have much, much to say to her."

"Who is Charlotte?" asked the female; "and where does she live?"

"Who is she!" demanded Amos: "my daughter, to be sure—my beloved child. Tell some one to ride express and fetch her: Rattler will carry him in no time at all."

"Ride where?" demanded the woman again.

"To Waltham, to Waltham!" answered the wounded man; "and for God's sake lose no

time about it. My sands are running out fast ; and I cannot close my eyes till they have looked upon her sweet face at least once again."

"Let the unfortunate man's wishes be attended to," said the stranger to whom Amos owed his overthrow, and who had entered the apartment to inquire after him as he thus opened his mind to the nurse. The woman hastened to give the necessary orders ; while the visiter, approaching the bed, sat down beside it, and gazed, not without pity, bordering almost on remorse, upon its occupant.

"Who are you ?" asked Amos in a feeble voice. "Ah ! I see now, my enemy, my personal enemy. Well, I forgive you, at all events : yet, I never did you wrong, and scarcely deserved to have my life taken by your hand. How came you to dodge me as you did,—what was your particular spite against me ?"

"None, friend, none, I assure you," answered the other. "I dodged you as a mere matter of duty ; and as a matter of duty would have made you my prisoner, had you chosen to surrender. I bore you no ill will,—I had no cause to bear it. I never saw you till we met at the Wheel on Barham Downs."

"And how came we to meet there ?" demanded Amos eagerly.

"Oh, for the matter of that, you must ask some of your associates. All that I know about the matter is, that I received instructions to repair to the Wheel at an early hour yesterday morning; to watch the arrival of a person answering your description; to ascertain whither he was bound; to follow, or go before him, stage by stage; and, last of all, to have a force ready between Dungeness and No. 8 battery, sufficient to meet and overcome a gang of smugglers, acting under the guidance of resolute leaders. You know how I performed my part in the drama: had you abstained from offering a resistance which was useless, or been less unfortunate than to kill my companion by your fire, you might have escaped; but seeing that gallant youth fall, I swore to avenge him, and I kept my vow."

"Betrayed by our own people," muttered Amos faintly: "who could the traitor be?"

"One who has repeatedly communicated information to us before, and who receives a regular pension from the Custom-house for doing so. But, of course, you scarcely expect that I should tell you more."

"Well, then, leave me, friend," replied Amos. "I would fain sleep if I could: at all events, I desire to be alone."

The officer withdrew as the sick man requested, and his place was forthwith supplied by the nurse. She sat down at a distance from the bed, and drawing the curtains close, strove to cast her patient into the shade: but her care availed nothing. He tossed about, feverish and miserable; repeatedly called upon her to give him drink, and demanded on each occasion to be informed whether Charlotte had been sent for, and how long it might be ere she could arrive. Thus the hours of darkness stole on, wretchedly enough for Amos, and far from agreeably to the person who waited upon him: neither did the return of light bring with it any other relief to him than that which the mind ill at ease with itself generally receives from the knowledge that the whole world is astir, and that time for deep or continued thought is not to be expected.

The day wore on, and often and often, when the clock struck, or some other incident brought the passage of time conspicuously under his observation, Amos, though becoming rapidly weaker every moment, renewed his inquiries as to the coming of his daughter. Twilight, indeed, had begun to gather round his bed ere any intelligence reached him; and the heavy eye and

the labouring breath denoted the closing scene, when a noise of carriage-wheels moving with great velocity along the road caught his ear. The eyelid, which had wellnigh shut up the orb for ever, rose as if instinctively; his breathing became regular, he even raised his head from the pillow; and when the carriage stopped, and the sound of footsteps on the stair reached him, he made an effort to sit up. Thus it was with him when the chamber-door flew open, and Charlotte rushed to the bed-side.

“My daughter, my daughter!—thank God, thank God!” exclaimed the unhappy man, falling into her embrace, and becoming instantly speechless.

“My father!” shrieked the agonized girl—“my father! is it thus we meet! Oh, it was not then for nothing that the shadows of that terrible night came over you. Speak to me—look upon me—it is I, Charlotte, your own Charlotte! Oh, speak to me! speak to me, my father, or I will die at your bed-side!”

“Bless thee, bless thee, my child!” cried her father, somewhat recovered. “Oh I had much, much to say; but my strength fails me fearfully, rapidly.—Woman!” cried he to the nurse, gasping all the while, “give me wine,—

I want something to support me,—I want the spark kept in only for a few moments ;—Wine, I say, wine,—give me wine !”

The nurse obeyed. She poured out a large glassful of wine, and gave it to him ; and he drank with avidity, and was revived. He then besought her to aid him in sitting up ; and when he had attained to that attitude, to support him with pillows ; after which he desired to be left alone with his daughter. Of course he was immediately obeyed.

“Charlotte,” said he, as soon as the door closed upon them, “my hours are numbered : I cannot live,—and to die, oh, my God ! the thought is terrible. I besought you to pray for me :—have you done so ?”

“No, papa, I have not,” replied his daughter ; “you afterwards forbade me to do so : but I will pray for you now ;—I will pray that you may not die,—you shall not die.”

“Do, oh do !” cried he wildly : “or stay ;—desire the nurse to go for the minister of the parish ; his prayers will avail, if prayers avail at all. And you, child, say, before he comes, what is the secret that has eaten into your vitals. Why have you been so dull of late ? why are your looks so haggard even now ?”

“Do not ask me, papa — do not ask me

now; it would but increase your misery.—Oh! you shall not die, you must not die!—you will recover, and then I will tell you all—all, no matter what the consequences may be either to me or to others.”

“Charlotte,” said Amos solemnly, “if you desire to see my life go out in peace, I adjure you to hide nothing from me now. If you wish to receive my last blessing, speak out—what has befallen?”

The unfortunate girl threw herself down on her knees, and buried her face in the bed-clothes: her whole frame shook with agony, and for several minutes she seemed incapable of any exertion. He repeated his demand in the same solemn tone, and she raised her head.

“Do not curse me, oh, my father—do not spurn me from you. I am a lost creature,—ruined, and utterly undone!”

“What!” cried the wounded man, excitement and horror giving him a fresh lease of strength—“retract these words, Charlotte!—tell me that I have misunderstood you,—relieve my mind from this horrid suspicion; or else say what fiend has robbed you of your innocence, and me of my peace for ever.”

“Marshall is the author of my wrong and of my shame, which cannot long be hidden,”

said Charlotte, as she again bowed down her head and lay in mute agony along the foot of the bed. As to Amos, he was like a man utterly bewildered; he could not speak,—he seemed not to comprehend what had been uttered; he only gazed straight before him, as if there had been on the bed-curtain some characters inscribed from which the truth might be collected. Thus it was for several minutes with both of them; at the conclusion of which Amos, in a voice husky and broken, repeated his former question. The wretched girl looked up.

“It is too true, father—it is indeed too true; I am a guilty and fallen creature, who for weeks has longed to confess her transgression to you, and to throw herself on your forgiveness. But from day to day I have been held back by assurances on his part that all would yet be well, and that in his own character he would be in a condition to make me amends for the wrong that I have suffered. Ay, even on the night before you left us, I drew from him a confession that he is in reality a man of rank; and that so soon as you should have accomplished the delicate affair in which he employed you, he would be able to lay aside the mask.—But now, oh, my father! live—live

to forgive me and to avenge my wrongs, for I see that I am indeed betrayed and deserted."

"I will live, girl!" replied he fiercely: "I will live to avenge, whether I forgive you or not. Leave me for a few moments, however, and send the commander of the Coast-guard here. Oh, dupe, dupe, ten-fold dupe!—Did you hear what I said? Go quickly and do my message, or I shall not have strength to accomplish what I intend."

Charlotte obeyed; and Captain Colville, (so the officer was called,) making haste to obey the summons, was at the bed-side of his prisoner in a moment. The conference, which was earnest, and conducted on both sides with great eagerness, lasted about a quarter of an hour; at the close of which period the captain quitted the sick man's chamber, and hurrying down stairs, directed his horse to be saddled. He had mounted, and was setting out, when the clergyman of the parish arrived.

"There is one above much desires to see you," said he, "and, if I mistake not, stands sorely in need of advice. But he has asked for his daughter in the first place; where is she?"

Charlotte sprang forward and hurried up stairs. She found her father still labouring under the most painful excitement: his mind,

indeed, seemed so engrossed with projects of revenge on Marshall, that all thoughts of his own condition were banished from it ; nor was it till she ventured to inform him of the presence of the clergyman below, that the sense even of bodily pain returned. When the excitement began to subside, however, the effect was remarkably striking. At first his manner was as fierce as ever ; but by degrees anger itself wore gradually out, as the twilight fades shade by shade till it deepens into night.

“Who sent for a parson?” demanded he: “is this a time to play the hypocrite? Oh for four-and-twenty hours of the strength that I once had ! Years, years of this degrading weakness would I endure, if these could but gain me one day such as I could lately reckon upon—one day for revenge ! But it will not do ; my limbs are a burthen to me,—I cannot move them ; I am as helpless as a baby.—Charlotte, is this you ? Come near to me, my child—come near, that I may bless you. Have you prayed for me, Charlotte ? Pray, pray,—I am weak—I am cold ;—there is a film before my eyes—I cannot see. What is that ? Pardon, pardon,—oh, my God ! pardon, pardon !”

Charlotte gazed in her father's face: the features had become suddenly rigid ; the eyes

were fixed, the lips moved, but no sounds followed. She sprang from her knees, on which she had cast herself, ran to the landing-place, and called aloud for the minister. He hurried up stairs, and following the agitated girl, knelt down, as she did, at the bedside. Earnest and deep was the good man's prayer in behalf of one who never prayed for himself; and for a brief space it seemed as if the patient understood him. But the symptoms of consciousness which at first he had exhibited, became gradually less and less manifest, and then ceased altogether. The hand which grasped that of Charlotte lost its tension; the laboured breathing was heard no more; the head rolled to one side, the jaw fell, the lamp of life had gone out.

"God's will be done!" said the curate; "and you, poor girl, must submit to it."

But he spoke to one who heard him not. Charlotte had fallen forward upon the bed, and lay as insensible to all external objects as the corpse beside which she had lately been kneeling.

CHAPTER IX.

EFFECTS OF CAUSES.

WHEN Charlotte awoke from that long and fearful trance, there came in upon her a full consciousness of her forlorn condition, so sad, so humiliating, so overwhelming, that to close her eyes again with the assurance that she should never open them more, would have been to her the most satisfactory mandate that could have been uttered. The only being in life whom she looked to with affection and something like respect had left her. True, her mother lived, and, as far as her capabilities extended, she had hitherto proved herself an affectionate mother; but independently of the worse than equivocal nature of her position, she was destitute of education, and little, if at all, endowed with feeling, in the sense which Charlotte was accustomed to apply to the term. Moreover, the unfortunate girl's personal situation was the most distressing which it is possible for the imagination to conceive. Certain, if her life should

be prolonged, of becoming herself a mother, without the title which can alone hallow the tie, she saw herself on the brink of a precipice from which there seemed no retreating; for the events of the day on which her father quitted home had sufficed to set her right on more than one point concerning which she had heretofore been in error. It will be necessary to go back for a brief space to that eventful period of time, in order to place her actual position in its proper point of view.

When Charlotte rose in the morning, and found her father gone, she neither experienced nor expressed surprise. The conversation which she had had with Marshall over-night prepared her for such an occurrence; and if her father's manner just before they parted occasioned a feeling of anxiety, it would be too much to say that it amounted to positive uneasiness. She knew that he was going to undertake some business peculiarly delicate and important; and she had read enough to come to the conclusion, that men entrusted with grave matters of state are always liable to fits of despondency. To her mother's inquiries, therefore, she replied cheerfully and confidently; assuring her that the absentee would return ere four-and-twenty hours passed

by, and that, in all probability, he would never be required to quit home in a similar manner again. It was not a hard task to lull to sleep the anxieties of a woman of the house-keeper's temperament; so, for an hour or two, things went on at Ware-farm much as they were accustomed to do on ordinary occasions. But towards noon, just as Charlotte was preparing to walk out, a little girl arrived with a note, which was put into her hands. It ran thus:—

“Circumstances have occurred, my beloved girl, which render it necessary for me to quit this place; at all events, for a time. Whether the cloud that at present lowers over my fortunes will ever be dispelled, I know not; but should it disperse, or even moderate in its character, no matter how slightly, you shall be made acquainted with the fact, and I be rendered happy in the renewal of an intimacy which has constituted my whole delight in obscurity. Alas! in linking your fate with one whose life must continue to be spent amid the turmoil and vexation of party, you have subjected your gentle nature to that which it was never designed to endure; and I, in taking advantage of your devoted attachment, have everything wherewith to reproach myself. But what are

we, after all, except creatures of destiny? It may be that we shall never meet again; and if so, be it your business to forget one who never can forget you. Still let us hope for better things. Meanwhile, farewell, dearest girl: may every happiness attend you, prays your own most devoted and attached,

“PAL”

(This syllable partially erased)

“J. MARSHALL”

Charlotte read this epistle thrice over from beginning to end, before she could sufficiently command her reason to determine what it meant. The first perusal, indeed, inflicted upon her a blow which rendered sense, intellect, the faculty of comprehending, all of them dull; and the second and the third, so far from dispelling the haze, seemed only to increase its density. At last, however, judgment reasserted its supremacy, and a conviction that she was cruelly and utterly betrayed followed as a matter of course. Now, though in calamities of a minor nature, tears and lamentations, and sometimes hysterics, indicate the misery of the afflicted, such sorrow as that of which Charlotte was the victim is always mute. She laid aside her cloak and bonnet,

withdrew to her own apartment, sat down in a chair, and so continued, without moving limb or feature, for the space of a full hour.

From this waking trance she was at last roused by the entrance of her mother, who had seen her receive the note, watched its sad effect upon her, observed her retire, and becoming uneasy at so prolonged an absence, now broke in upon her solitude. Not by the opening of the door, however, was Charlotte attracted. On the contrary, her eyes were still fixed on vacancy, when her mother, advancing to the opposite end of the room, laid her hand upon her shoulder, and called her by her name. She started up like one affected by a shock of electricity, and in a hurried manner demanded to be informed what was the matter.

"Matter, child!" said her mother; "nay, it is I that must ask what is the matter. There you sit, like an enchanted creature, motionless in your chair; so that I enter your room, and jog your very elbow without being noticed; and then you jump up all at once and ask what is the matter?"

"I did not observe you, mother; I was not aware that you were near me. Are you ill? or has my father returned? or what is it?"

"Charlotte, *you* are ill," replied the house-

keeper; "you have been ill for some time; and the letter you received an hour ago has not made you better."

"What letter?—whence did it come? from whom did it come?" demanded Charlotte, speaking with extraordinary rapidity, while her cheeks grew deadly pale.

"That you ought to know better than I," answered her mother; "and yet I think that I ought not to be kept in the dark neither. Is it of your father that you have heard?"

"Oh, no, no, mother; I know nothing of my father; would that I did! But leave me for five minutes, only for five minutes; I am not quite myself; I shall be better then, and we can talk of it by-and-by."

"Of what, child, of what?"

"Oh, never mind, only leave me; I wish to be alone; I will join you in ten minutes, if you will but leave me."

The mother obeyed, not without some grumbling, with which were mixed up sundry allusions to the airs which some folks gave themselves, considering they were some folks' children. But Charlotte did not hear all this; and, if she had heard it, would not have noticed it. On the contrary, no sooner was her mother gone, than she arrayed herself once

more in her cloak and bonnet. This done, she passed quietly from the house by the back-door, and turning her face towards the village, hurried thither at a quick pace. She made at once for Marshall's shop. The shutters were up, the door was locked, there was not a symptom either about it, or the dwelling above, that a living soul lingered near the spot; indeed, it was not till after she had repeatedly knocked, so repeatedly as to attract the notice of more than one passer-by, that any notice was taken of her signal. At last the female who had acted as Marshall's housekeeper, thrust her head from an open window, and demanded in no very gentle tone the nature of her business.

"Where is Mr. Marshall?" asked Charlotte, in a faltering voice.

"How can I tell?" was the answer; "I only know that he is not here, nor has been since midnight; but as to where he may be, you must inquire elsewhere, if you want to discover."

Charlotte did not desire to learn more. Her miserable curiosity was satisfied: she returned home, passed quietly once more to her chamber, and went to bed. Neither of her mother nor of the apothecary, who was called in, would she take any notice. She answered no inquiries; she

uttered no complaint ; but lay with her face to the wall, mute as one who possessed not the faculty of speech, and perfectly motionless.

While such was the condition of affairs at Ware-farm, the little world of Waltham laboured under a very high degree of excitement in consequence of the sudden disappearance of one of its most conspicuous public characters, in the person of Mr. Marshall the grocer.

At first, though his shop-windows continued closed long after the hour at which he was accustomed to open them, the passers-by took it for granted, either that he had been kept up late over-night by business, or else that raking and good company might possibly be in fault. But when nine, ten, eleven, and even twelve o'clock struck, and still the shutters retained their places, fears began to be entertained that some evil had overtaken him, and the propriety of investigating the matter was suggested. Not wishing, however, to take so much upon themselves, the neighbours called in the aid of the village aristocrats ; who, comprehending Mr. Sankey, the curate, the apothecary, and finally the constable, gave directions that the mystery should be investigated without delay. Accordingly the door was assailed, at first gently, then the reverse of

pressing, had made, on the night when he administered the sleeping potion to his house-keeper, what is called a moonlight flitting. His plans, moreover, being arranged with great address, suffered no check in their development. Having ample aid at hand, he not only succeeded in removing all that was really valuable within doors, but emptied the vault of its contents. With these, therefore, he was far on his way to a place of safety ere his associate had come into contact with the coast-blockade; and hence, when intelligence of the disaster got abroad, and its consequences began to appear, he was beyond their reach. And well was it for him that he had acted with so much forethought. The people of Waltham, though informed of Amos's fate, were yet perplexing themselves to account for the flight of Marshall, when Captain Colville, at the head of a small party of seamen and revenue officers, arrived in the village. They surrounded Marshall's house; they penetrated into his back kitchen; they raised the hearth, and displayed to the wondering eyes of a crowd of spectators the vault that lay beneath. But here their triumphs ended. The vault was empty; and he who had so long and so cunningly used it was gone, they knew not whither.

Such was the end of Mr. Amos, and such the result of the last scheme which he devised—a scheme of vengeance, the hope of accomplishing which gave him all the comfort that he enjoyed in his dying moments. His fate was worthy of one who, setting the known laws of God and man at defiance, makes an artificial point of honour the object of his worship; and holds it right to execute a purpose once determined on and expressed at the expense of any given amount of suffering either to himself or others. He received his death-wound while bravely supporting an unjust cause; and breathed almost his last sigh while arranging a method of crushing the man from whom he had received a mortal injury. As to his family, their fate was not different from what might have been expected. Having no legal claim upon any portion of the property which remained after the father's debts were paid, and being without a friend in the world to take pity upon them, his children—that is, such as were incapable of earning their own livelihood—came with their mother upon the parish; which measured out to them, as Amos had meted to the paupers of his own time, barely enough to supply those wants of which till now they had never known the pressure. With respect,

again, to Charlotte, her destiny was still more humiliating. In a room in the workhouse, so soon as her days were numbered, she gave birth to a son; for her mother, with inexplicable harshness, drove her in that dark hour to seek a shelter in the last asylum of poverty and shame; and many and bitter were the tears which she shed as she hung over the infant's cradle. But Charlotte had never learned to pray; her tears were not therefore tears of penitence, but of deep mortification—of mortification arising from the memory of station, character, respectability, comforts, lost for ever; and they consequently brought, with them no medicaments for a lacerated spirit, no balm wherewith to bind up the heart that was broken. Charlotte clung to the workhouse, from the hour she entered it, with a pertinacity that surprised everybody: she never, indeed, quitted her room; but sat in one corner, nursing her child, as if there had not existed in the wide world a third human being. At last, however, it was announced to her by the parish officer, that she was not a fit object to continue as a permanent inmate of the building. She either could not or would not do the drudgery of the house, and no young person could be permitted to reside there without doing drudgery; she was there-

fore expected to return to her mother's, either carrying the infant along with her, and receiving the customary allowance for its keep, or leaving it to be cared for where it was born. Charlotte listened to these statements with dry eyes; she kissed the child frantically; handed it to the mistress of the house, and walked out. But she did not go to her mother's. On the contrary, when last seen by a person who recognised her, she was hurrying with rapid strides on the road to London, and she refused to answer or acknowledge the salutation with which she was greeted. Of course, there was a good deal of speculation as to what could have become of her, when morning and night succeeded each other without bringing her back; but speculation soon exhausted itself, and people contented themselves with saying, "It is a great pity; she was a sweet pretty girl, and if properly brought up might have made an excellent wife for some one: but what could be expected from such training? Nothing short of a miracle can make a female turn out well, who finds in her mother an example of unchastity, in her father a teacher of irreligion."



THE
VERSEER'S DAUGHTER.

committee, by any chance, presumed to oppose itself to the demands, however unreasonable, of an applicant for relief, it was no unusual thing for the pauper to cast in the teeth of the objector Mr. Amos's destinies. Of course, this was never done without a warning being appended very much like to a threat: "You see what Amos got by being hard upon the poor: you had best take care, or else what happened to him may happen to you also."

How far the rate-payers were or were not operated upon by this species of argument, it would be hard to determine. Bring great calamities home to men's immediate neighbourhood, and it is astonishing how instrumental you may make them in guiding their decisions; for even those who affect to deride the principle of treating the accidents of life as moral lessons, cannot always avoid being taught by them. Be this, however, as it may, the consideration of past events operated, together with apprehensions for the future, to produce among the parishioners generally a cessation of party spirit. They combined to lament the encouragement that had been given to what all now denounced as seditious cabals among the labourers; while the profligate press was treated with a condemnation as hearty as the most bi-

goted admirer of the old times could have desired. Nay, the Blues themselves, forgetting, or seeming to forget, their political partialities, ceased to take in the Mercury, because it mixed up with political disquisition the grossest attacks on private character, — attacks of which these gentlemen could now calculate the justice, seeing that they and their personal friends were exposed to them.

During the continuance of this temporary calm, frequent meetings were held for the purpose of devising some well digested scheme, by which the people might be kept in constant employment, if not profitably, at all events without loss to their employers. The plan of the parish farm had clearly failed. To be sure, no one could pretend to say that it had received a fair trial; for whatever advantage individuals might have derived from it, to the parish at large it was a constant source of expense; still, there was a prejudice against continuing it, which few appeared either willing or able to combat. What then was to be done? In like manner the often-tried device of portioning out the surplus labourers among the occupiers, according to the amount of each man's occupation, might, it was said, answer well enough, provided you could ensure a strict

adherence to their pledges in all quarters. But the worst of it was, that people soon began to grow tired of a constant expenditure of money; and first one, and then another, quietly backed out of the arrangement. Thus the entire burthen was cast upon a few, who, however willing to do their parts, neither would nor could do more; and so the arrangement continually fell to pieces. That project, therefore, after a lengthened and warm discussion, was pronounced, like the other, inadmissible; and the question very naturally came to be asked again, what then shall we do?—It will be necessary before pursuing the subject further, to state who were the chief speakers in the debate.

Just before the breaking out of what will long be spoken of as “the agricultural disturbances,” there had come to settle in the vicinity of Waltham one Mr. Jonathan Salvage, formerly superintendent and part proprietor of a stay-lace manufactory in Manchester, but now, having retired in good time from business, a gentleman, living on his means. Little ambitious of taking a lead among men whose habits and ideas ran in a totally different channel from his own, Mr. Salvage had hitherto kept aloof from parish meetings; paying his rates punctually as often

as the collector came round for them, but in no other respect interfering with the management or support of the poor. Like other men, however, who have spent the best part of their days amid the fetid and emasculatory atmosphere of a workshop, Mr. Salvage had his own ideas as to the purposes for which society existed. He did not, indeed, object to the process of ploughing and sowing the land, for he was a great bread-eater; and he approved of hop cultivation, because he loved beer: but in his view of such matters there was no picture so attractive to the eye of the philosopher and the patriot, as that which offered as its most conspicuous feature long rows of red brick buildings. "Once establish these," he would say, "and you will soon have the satisfaction to see how men can bring the powers of nature under their own control by their own contrivances;—how the wind and the fire are made to act in a furnace, so that metal itself runs out in a pure stream;—and how, by the application of steam, order and beauty come forth from confusion in the most unerring manner possible. And as to the moral effects of manufactures, under what circumstances are people so happy, and therefore so innocent, as when they are earning comforts not only for themselves, but for

others? Depend upon it, that to think of making a country like Great Britain, which abounds with coal, iron, and all useful minerals,—which can boast of a population robust, enlightened, intelligent, and enterprising—and which has everywhere water in abundance, — anything else than a manufacturing country, is to abuse the gifts which Nature has given you. Agriculture may be very well where land is abundant and the population scanty; but agriculture, in England, ought to be cried down as a separate interest,—its pursuits being reserved entirely for the amusement of those who have made their fortunes, as I have made mine, by other means.”

If Mr. Salvage did not scruple to hold such language, or to broach such opinions, before the rioting began, he became still more confirmed in the justice of his theory afterwards. “You threw in my teeth,” such was now his argument, “the sudden outbreaks to which a manufacturing population is liable. You reminded me of the tumults of 1818 in Manchester, as well as of the state of uneasiness and dread into which every check in disposing of their goods is sure to throw those who live by the shuttle. But what better is your own condition? Your pea-

santry, of whose loyalty and virtue we have heard so much, appear to be quite as ripe for mischief as our artisans; and if they don't carry things to the same extent, you may thank their want of intelligence, and not of good-will. Besides, can anything be more atrocious than the new system that has sprung up among them of incendiarism? No, no, gentlemen; it is quite clear to me, that nothing can keep your people quiet except profitable employment; and how you are to accomplish that without looking further than mere country labour, I confess that I am not witch enough to discover."

Such was the burthen of a speech of which, at the vestry-meeting just alluded to, Mr. Salvage delivered himself. It was interlarded, to be sure, with most of the pet phrases which political economists love to use,—such as, the exchange of labour for a subsistence paid out of capital—the fluctuating nature of the demand for labour,—the rise and fall of prices,—the profits of labour,—the growth of capital, with the Lord knows how many other flowers of rhetoric beside. But the point which alone seemed to be felt by the auditors, was that which bore upon the question immediately before them. Was it probable that, by esta-

blishing a manufactory in the parish, they would be able to relieve themselves from some of the burthens under which they groaned? And if they did, was it not certain that, to obtain a momentary relief, they would be laying the foundation of endless cares and annoyances hereafter. Among those who adopted this latter opinion, and maintained it with the greatest eagerness, Giles Solley was one. He admitted that, for the moment, the manufacturing project might answer; but he protested against the adoption of a measure, the inevitable result of which must be troubles and vexations by-and-by, to which those now considered intolerable would prove the merest trifles. Giles was surprised to find among the individuals whom the eloquence of Mr. Salvage had gained over some of the most influential occupiers in the parish; nevertheless, being pressed to bring forward some proposition of his own, he did not hesitate to do so.

"With respect," said he, "to Mr. Salvage's general argument, that it is unwise to treat agriculture in this country as a separate and a vitally important interest, I think that it will not be necessary to say much, with the view of satisfying this meeting that a more absurd theory never was broached. Not to say a

word of the habits and genius of a large proportion of the people, I ask him whether, in the history of the world, he has ever read of a state, not absolutely artificial in its very composition, that has attempted to apply the undivided energies of its population to commerce and manufactures. He may tell me of Genoa, and the Hanse Towns, and other petty republics, which the accidental advantages of local situation, and the state of the world at the time, puffed up for a brief space into hollow greatness; but if he can point to one nation half so populous or half so extensive as England, which has flourished even as long as Genoa flourished, without making agriculture walk hand in hand with commerce, then I will give up my case. However, as we have met here not to discuss abstract propositions, but to consider what may most conveniently be done in order to relieve the inhabitants of Waltham from some of the burthens under which they groan, I do think that both he and I would sadly misapply your time did we enter into any such controversy.

“I object to Mr. Salvage’s proposal on several grounds. First,—I do think, notwithstanding all that has been advanced to the contrary, that the introduction of manufactures

into a district such as this, is not likely to make the people either more moral or more contented. Secondly,—the state of the districts already addicted to manufactures is not such as to encourage us in the idea of incurring similar hazards here. If any faith may be put in the common accounts of the day, our manufacturers are to the full as badly off as ourselves;—nay, it was but yesterday, so to speak, that we had a king's letter read in church, and a collection made afterwards, for the purpose of keeping those very men from starving whose mode of life we are recommended to imitate. Thirdly,—will Mr. Salvage have the goodness to describe to us the particular branch of manufacture which he fancies that a young and awkward establishment would be likely to carry on with profit, at a period when all the old and well-trained houses are complaining that they cannot so much as keep their own? Only consider the expenses which we must incur at the outset: we have buildings to erect; we have machinery to purchase; we have superintendents and foremen to hire at high salaries; we have workmen to form,—for surely Mr. Salvage himself will admit that the present race of labouring men could never be brought to use their hard and horny hands, except to spoil whatever job the

overseer might put them to. To what, then, may we look?—to some possible benefit to the next generation, to be purchased by the certain ruin of the present: for I need not say that we, who find it difficult to go on as we have hitherto done, would be still more put to it were new demands made upon us. I conceive, therefore, that the manufacturing notion is not to be entertained for a moment.

“But you will ask me, what then do I propose to do? Listen, and I will state my plan fairly, with the consequences which I have persuaded myself to believe would arise out of its adoption. All we who occupy farms of even moderate extent, and still more those whose holding is extensive, profess that the land will not pay for the expense of cultivation: why should not we spare a few acres each, in order to try what the poor can make of it? Say that the industrious labourer who is willing to take it shall be allowed to hire a plot of land, varying from one to two acres. He shall pay for it—to me, for example—precisely the same rent that I pay to the landlord, and shall be liable to his proportion of the burthens—such as tithe, poor-rates, and so forth—which the whole farm is bound to bear. In order to set him fairly afloat, I will undertake to supply him with seed for the

first year ; but after that all expenses must be defrayed by himself, and he shall be at liberty to raise any description of crop that he chooses. If he accept my proposal, he shall undertake neither to come to the parish for relief under any circumstances, nor to expect more than four days' steady employment in each week. I very much mistake the characters of many of the men still, if they will not jump at such an offer, and thrive upon the system, if adopted. Only think, gentlemen, how much may be worked out of two acres of land, when a man, and perhaps two well-grown lads or boys, devote a large portion of their time to it ! Besides, by giving the people this kind of assistance, you give them at the same time an interest in keeping down the rates, to which they equally with yourselves must contribute ; and you hold out to them the strongest of all inducements to keep clear of the ale-house. Such is my proposal : and not to detain you longer, I shall only add, that if any gentleman will co-operate with me, I am ready to try the experiment to-morrow, and to stake on its result my own character for judgment in agricultural affairs."

Giles Solley was listened to throughout with an attention so marked, that at first he was

willing to construe the silence of his auditors into an acquiescence in his views ; but in arriving at this conclusion he had only deceived himself. Neither the reports of others, nor their own personal experience, had yet convinced the tenantry of Waltham that a farmer is not always likely to succeed in proportion to the quantity of land that he uses. It was still with them a sort of axiom, that small farms must necessarily be unproductive ; and the idea of subletting any portion of their respective holdings was derided.

What !” cried several voices at once, “ would you convert your labourers into so many farmers ? would you make little gentlemen of them ? No, no. A garden, in which he may cultivate a few pot-herbs, and spend, if he be so disposed, his spare hours of a summer’s afternoon, may be, and doubtless is, of great benefit to the labourer : but to let him have a couple of acres, and to expect that he shall ever pay his rent, the notion is ridiculous in the extreme.”

It was to no purpose that Giles reminded the objectors that the experiment had actually been tried, and tried successfully, elsewhere. “ They did not know what might be done in other counties, but in Kent they were sure it

would never answer." So that device shared the fate of all that had gone before it, and was rejected.

While the meeting thus listened to proposals only to reject and to condemn them, the evening wore space, and already a motion was made to adjourn, without coming to any conclusion, when some one suggested a fresh scheme, of that temporising, or half-and-half kind, which men in difficulties are very apt to adopt, but which seldom leads to any fortunate issue. "Though it might be unwise to run hastily into expense by embarking on a large scale in manufacturing speculations, more ought certainly to be made, or at least attempted, than had yet been done, of the looms of which they were already possessed. What if they fitted up all the underground apartments in the workhouse as shops? what if they provided some addition to the machinery—looked out for a competent person to take charge of it—paid him liberally, and employed in learning the business the children of such paupers as were out of regular employ, and by reason of their numerous families, were a serious burthen to the parish? To such a project no reasonable objection could be offered; and should it succeed—should the

demand for the manufactured goods go beyond the supply, and an opportunity offer of turning more idle hands into the same line,—why, then they could gradually enlarge both their manufactory and their buildings, till in the end Waltham might become, as it were of its own accord, a flourishing place.”

It was in vain that Giles Solley on the one hand, and Mr. Jonathan Salvage on the other, protested against this scheme: the one, dreading, as the worst of all possible calamities such a change as success must effect in the manners and habits of the people—the other, giving it as his firm opinion that success could not possibly attend efforts so contemptible. They alike addressed their appeals to prejudiced auditors. “What are you to gain,” said the one, “when you have gained everything except a rapid increase of population, and, of course, a constant liability to distress?” “How can you hope,” exclaimed the other, “to push advantageously the manufacture of an article which is fabricated in every workhouse within the compass of twenty miles, and with which, of course, all your markets are glutted?” But the arguments of both were treated with neglect: a resolution was put and carried, “That there were facilities in the place for establishing a profitable

trade in sacking, of which due advantage had not heretofore been taken." This was followed by other resolutions, to the effect that it was desirable to amend the error; and, last of all, a committee was named for the purpose of devising and carrying into effect the most judicious method of acting up to the views of the meeting.

CHAPTER II.

SEEK AND FIND.

WHILE the parishioners of Waltham were thus holding consultations, and devising schemes for the better management of their surplus poor, Charlotte Amos was reaping to its fullest extent the bitter fruits of the sort of education which had been bestowed upon her, and of the wretched example to which all her days she had been subjected.

When she quitted the workhouse, the unfortunate girl was not only without a plan for the guidance of her future life, but in a frame of mind which in a great measure unfitted her for forming one. Between her mother and herself there had never existed any cordiality of feeling. Raised, by the cultivation which her intellectual faculty had received, above her natural level, Charlotte could not always hold back even the expression of her disgust when she contemplated the coarseness of her mother's manners, lis-

tened to her rude conversation, and, above all, recollected the stigma which her frailty had cast upon her offspring. Her mother, on the other hand, was jealous of Charlotte's accomplishments, and of the influence which she exercised over her father. And hence, though they equally avoided an open breach during what may be called their prosperous days, the intercourse that subsisted between them was far from tending to promote their mutual happiness, or endear them one to the other. When the tide of misfortune broke in, however, the feeble barriers which delicacy had thrown up were swept away at once. Charlotte, deprived of her father's countenance—poor, and, above all, convicted of folly, became an object of constant vituperation to her parent, who seemed to take a savage delight in witnessing her humiliation and exaggerating her misery.

“A pretty pass things have come to, surelie!” was the chorus of all the woman's songs. “Poor I, that never had no larning, and know'd no better, couldn't be forgiven—not I—because I lived with my own master and bore him a family. But Miss, who goes to a French boarding-school, and plays the pianny, may do just what she likes—take up with Lord knows who, and disgrace herself and all connected with her as often as she pleases.

Well, I was never put to bed in a workhouse, anyhow; though I'm thinking there's a fine lady, not a hundred miles off, that'll be glad to be there when her turn comes."

From such society Charlotte withdrew without a pang even to the workhouse; nor was the idea of returning to it, under any circumstances, permitted to cross her mind for a moment.

When I say that Charlotte Amos turned her back on the last receptacle of the miserable, destitute of all plan, and of the power of forming one, it is right that I should be fully understood. Plan she certainly had none; that is to say, though a constant subject of thought to herself, she never conjured up pictures except of a creature friendless, houseless, desolate, betrayed, broken-hearted. Over the utter darkness through which such characters appeared, moreover, scarcely one ray of hope was thrown: for Charlotte had never learned to pray; and the guilty and the wretched, who know not how to seek for comfort except in scenes from which guilt and wretchedness exclude them, are and must be miserable indeed.

Still there lingered within her heart a vague and indefinite project,—a wish, rather than

a design, to seek out Marshall, in spite of all the wrongs that he had done her, and to throw herself on his compassion. For woman in her natural state is a strange creature: wrong her, abuse her, lacerate her noblest feelings, and if she have once loved, she never ceases to love, no matter how unworthy the object may be on which her devotion has been fixed; nay, it does sometimes happen, that in exact proportion to the tyrant's unworthiness is the degree of influence which he is enabled to exercise over the victim of his baseness. Such, at least, was the case here. Charlotte knew that the man to whom she had given up all, had left her to poverty and to shame; yet she continued to dwell upon his image as it appeared to her when first he succeeded in establishing a mastery over her affections, forgetting the use to which his power had been turned, and its consequences, of which she was now reaping the fruits.

So blindly had Charlotte loved, and so completely was she thrown by circumstances on this single picture, which a diseased fancy had sketched out, that the utter dispersion of the dreams which Marshall's mysterious converse had created failed to awaken her to the truth. She knew that he was neither Lord

Palmerston, nor any other public man; she knew that he was a detected smuggler, and that the delicate negotiations in which her father had been employed, and in conducting which his life became a sacrifice, proved to be, after all, nothing more nor less than the management of a contraband trade. Yet her romantic imagination continued to clothe the heartless ruffian who had robbed her of peace, with a thousand noble attributes, such as the writers of fiction are sometimes apt to attribute to those who war against laws purely artificial;—nay, in the delicate nature of his position, she was enabled to find an excuse for the haste and apparent indifference with which he had abandoned her. How could he, who dared to oppose himself to constituted authorities, venture to indulge in the hour of peril the more tender emotions of the heart? No, no, she must not blame him too much: he had the best excuse in the pressing hazard of his situation, and had doubtless been put to it ever since in screening himself from ruin; and if he did fail to communicate by letter, doubtless the habits of his life taught him a degree of caution, of which it would be impossible for her to calculate the importance. She was certain that in his heart he loved her still;

autumn. Of the harvest, moreover, the last gleanings remained ; for in the hop-gardens on either side of the way the pickers were busy, and cheerful was the hum of their voices as it came up upon the light breeze, interrupted from time to time by peals of laughter. Poor Charlotte heard these sounds, for her outward senses were acute as they had ever been, but they created no emotion of joy in her heart. On the contrary, she redoubled her speed for a while as often as she came to the vicinity of a spot over which groups of the merry country-folks were scattered, and relaxed only when she felt or fancied that no human being was near. For memory and imagination, struggling for superiority, threw her by degrees into a sort of waking trance, which rendered her quite unconscious both of the passage of time and of the use which she herself was making of it ; nay, so dense was the haze which enveloped her understanding, that more than one public vehicle passed without her observing that the coachman had pulled up and offered her a seat to town. The truth is, that she came at length to such a state as to resemble rather a sleep-walker than any other object in nature. Though both eyes and ears were open, she neither heard nor saw, be-

cause every faculty was overborne except the power of thought.

With the faculties of reason and observation thus suspended, fatigue itself made no impression on her. She walked on and on without pausing to rest, till the sun, which had shone bright in mid-heaven at the commencement of her journey, sank under the horizon. The growing darkness recalled her to a sense of her immediate condition; imagination ceased to keep the other powers of the mind suspended, and, like one who is suddenly roused from a dream, she stopped and gazed round. The first sensation that came upon her in full force was a consciousness of extreme weariness: her knees shook; her eyes danced in her head; and had she not staggered towards a heap of stones by the wayside, and thrown herself down upon them, she must have fallen. Neither the outward senses, however, nor the ability of using them, were affected. She saw that she was on the outskirts of a town or large village, of which the principal street seemed to be alive with country people; while a field hard by was crowded with booths, tents, caravans, stalls, and other appendages of a fair. The sounds, likewise, that fell upon her ear all denoted a scene of revelry and dissipation. Drums were beat-

ing, clarionets sounding, bugles ringing, fifes screaming, and the pipe and tabour were heard only at intervals over the shouts of children, and the loud murmur of hundreds of talkers. If the consideration of possible difficulties to be surmounted ever did occur to her while meditating the enterprise in which she was now engaged, she had certainly not contemplated the hazard of being opposed to such as appeared now to bar her further progress. What was she to do? How could she venture to pass, alone and unprotected, amid crowds of drunken and dissolute people? and above all, where was she to spend the night? If her purse had been ever so well filled, could she hope to find fitting accommodation where every place of public entertainment seemed crowded with revellers? and destitute as she was of the means of paying even for a bed, who would take her in? For the first time since the idea of seeking Marshall took possession of her mind, a feeling not far distant from misgiving came over her. She repented, not that she had quitted Waltham, but that she had done so with a precipitancy which rendered preparation and forethought impossible, and almost wished that she were back again beside her infant in the workhouse.

Charlotte had taken her seat so near to the

entrance of the field where the fair seemed chiefly to be held, that it seemed next to impossible that she should long escape the observation of the crowds that were continually passing to and fro. She was neither unaware of this fact, nor of the inconveniences which were likely to arise from it; yet so thoroughly was her strength exhausted, that the thought of moving was intolerable to her. Timidly, therefore, and distrustingly, she looked through the deepening gloom upon each fresh group as it went or came; and thankful was she to find that all were too much occupied with concerns of their own to pay any regard to her. And thus it continued to be till twilight sank into night, of which the darkness was the more felt in the place where she was sitting, by reason of the glare which scores of lamps, flambeaux, and torches threw over the scene of the revel. "Oh that I could discover some shed or barn," exclaimed the unhappy girl at length, "under whose roof my aching head might find shelter!" She made a desperate effort as she pronounced these words, and rose; but before she had quitted the spot, a half-drunken rustic, attracted, as it seemed, by the movement, reeled towards her and threw his arm round her waist.

"What dost here, my pretty wench?" hic-

cupped the assailant. "Thee must go with me. There's plenty of nice gals in that 'ere booth; and thee can dance as well as the best on 'em, I'se warrant thee."

Charlotte struggled to free herself from his grasp, but retained sufficient self-command to suppress a scream.

"Pooh, pooh, lovey!" continued the ruffian; "it's no use kicking and flinging. Thee shall be my partner, that's sartain sure; and thee shall gi'e me a kiss or ever thee be half-an-hour older."

"Let me go, man!" cried Charlotte, whom he increasing rudeness of the savage both agitated and alarmed: "I am no acquaintance of yours, and you have no right to use me so. Let me go, or I will cry murder, and then——"

"Shout as loud as ever thee can, lovey—shout, and let thy pretty voice be heard, and see who 'll attend to it. Only doan't y'ee bite and scratch—'cause I woan't stand that no how, from man or woman."

Charlotte struggled vehemently to shake off a grasp which became each instant more ferocious and more alarming. Her bonnet was soon crushed in the contest, and her basket torn from her arm; yet so totally inadequate

was she to resist the giant strength of a man who seemed manifestly bent on doing her an injury, that she could not hinder him from lifting her from the ground, and bearing her away in a direction opposite to that whither at first he had proposed to carry her. She now felt that to keep silence any longer could not lead to good, but to evil : she screamed aloud, and, in the madness of despair, thrust both her hands into his face with a violence which caused him to stagger.

"Curse thee!" cried the brute, dashing her to the ground, "thee hast put out my eye ; but it shall be the worst job thee ever set about !"

He sprang towards her as he said this ; but taking advantage of the momentary respite which his first motion, under the influence of pain, had occasioned, she was already on her feet, and hurrying towards the lights. Fear lent her wings ; and though the miscreant followed hard upon her heels, she was already within the gateway that communicated between the field and the road ere he overtook her. Then, however, the grasp of a strong hand upon her cloak made her aware that escape was next to impossible. But her presence of mind did not forsake her. As the ruffian

pulled hard, she undid the fastening that begirt her neck, cast loose her arms from the mantle, and left it in his hand. He fell; and she was again enabled to leave him some paces behind. But such a scene could not take place without attracting general attention even amid the festivities of a fair. The crowd hastened to surround her: some shouted, some laughed, some seized her clothes, some cried "Shame to abuse the girl!" while she, imploring them to let her pass, plunged at every step deeper and deeper into difficulties.

"There goes thy Pall, Ben!" cried several voices at once. "After her, man! after her!"

"Will nobody save me?" exclaimed the unhappy girl when, looking back, she beheld her brutal enemy within a few paces of her. She stood at this time close to a caravan within which, as a copious hand-bill announced, was exhibited "The wonderful Scotch giantess, Miss Mungo Campbell, only nineteen years of age, and upwards of seven feet high." Her eye chanced in its wanderings to traverse the sort of platform on which, outside the show-place, the attendants of the giantess were collected, and instantly rested on one, apparently the master of the ceremonies, who was in the act of haranguing the mob. A scream, louder,

clearer, more shrill than that which terror wrings from mortal lips, burst from her. She bounded forward, sprang up the steps or ladder that conducted to the stage, and lay, motionless and insensible, in the arms of Marshall.

CHAPTER III.

MAN'S CONSTANCY.

It would be useless to attempt any description of the scene to which this extraordinary meeting gave immediate rise. The crowd yelled, jeered, shouted, roared, laughed: the brute who had so unintentionally assisted Charlotte in accomplishing the object of her journey could with difficulty be restrained from following her into the caravan, within which Marshall, too much astonished fully to comprehend the nature of his own feelings, had immediately conveyed her. With respect to Charlotte herself, she continued so long in a state of absolute unconsciousness, that even the heartless crew by whom she was surrounded became, if not softened, at least alarmed. At last she opened her eyes; and beholding the only picture in nature on which her imagination dwelt with delight, Marshall himself, leaning as it seemed affectionately over her, she closed them again, as if fearful of dispell-

ing so sweet a delusion. But when she heard the tones of his voice—when she felt her hand pressed warmly within his, and listened to the inquiries which he made into her condition—pronounced, as it seemed to her, with the same soft cadence which used in former days to breathe music to her ear,—doubt, fear, hope,—the memory of the past, the anticipation of the future,—all seemed to become absorbed in a sense of immediate and complete happiness. She sat up, and throwing her arms round his neck, wept aloud.

“Can this be reality?” exclaimed she, as soon as the power of utterance returned. “Am I awake? or is it only a dream that will pass away as hundreds of others have passed, and leave me to my sorrow?”

“And I, too, Charlotte,” replied Marshall, “what am I to think? Whence come you—whither are you going—what brought you here?”

“To seek you, Marshall,—my own, my own Marshall! Oh, if you knew what I have suffered since you abandoned me! Why did you leave me—why did you not take me with you? But all that is over now and forgotten. I have found you again; I am again in your arms; and what is there in life or in death

that I have cause to regret so long as you are with me?"

"Hulloa, Bill Jones!" interposed a gruff voice, while the wooden fabric shook as the speaker made a stride in advance; "what the devil does all this mean? Are we going to have the romantics again? A nice Lothario I have got for a husband, to be sure! a perfect lady-killer, by the holy jingo! D—n me, explain, and bundle this minx out of my caravan, either before or after, or else blow me tight if I don't do it myself."

Charlotte looked up, and beheld standing, beside the sort of couch on which she was herself reclining, an object which caused every other feeling to be swallowed up in disgust and terror. An enormous woman, probably six feet three inches in height, but of a breadth and thickness which defied computation, whose fingers were each equal in circumference to an ordinary female's wrist, and her face large, round, and swollen with the grossest indulgences, glared upon her with eyes so sunken between a pair of overhanging brows and the puff of the cheeks below, as to display no portion of their shape, except the sharp and keen pupils, that shot living fire into the frame of the fragile thing on whom they were fixed.

Neither was the effect diminished by the strange costume in which the monster was arrayed. A lofty turban, covered with spangles, surmounted her head; her robe was loose and flowing, composed of muslin and bedizened with faded tinsel; a massy gilt chain hung round her neck, and huge rings were on her fingers. Charlotte turned away with a shudder from the hideous spectacle, that she might cling apparently for protection to Marshall;—a movement which was not lost upon the giantess, and certainly did not tend to soothe her.

“I say, Jones,” continued the ogre, in a voice which more resembled the croaking of a raven than any other natural sound; “do ye think I can stand being insulted at this rate before my very face? Turn the hussey out, or by the holy poker——”

“Look ye, mother,” replied Marshall, “there’s no occasion to get warm. This girl is an old acquaintance of mine; you must see that she is ill and has been ill-used, and you would not have me play the brute so completely as to kick her out to be torn in pieces by the drunken clodhoppers below? Have a little patience, and if I can’t explain all to your satisfaction, why then I must take the consequences.”

"Explain all, you ungrateful beggar!" answered the virago. "What need is there of explanation? Don't I see how it is? This is another act of the Brummagem tragedy, and you think I'm going to be gulled a second time. I tell you I won't: so take your choice; bundle her out this instant, or else—right about face, march!"

"Sarves you right, mother," interposed a third party,—a man dressed in a tawdry silk jacket, who had been beating a tambourine to the sound of a clarionet and a pair of cymbals just before Charlotte broke in upon the amusements of the company;—"can't say I pity you at all;—had no business to take up with that 'ere wagabond chap, when you had one like myself at your command, what had never played you false at no time;—but suppose it was his smooth glib tongue as did it."

"Who wants any of your advice, jackanapes?" answered the female fury, turning sharp upon the last speaker. "You've lived so long on my bounty that you think you've a right to speak your mind, do you? But you're mistaken too. Howsomever, I can't much blame you neither; for I've been cruelly used, that's sertain."

As she said this, the monster sat down upon a bench that groaned under her weight, and pulling a sort of shawl from her huge pocket, applied one corner of it to her eyes. In the mean while, Charlotte, trembling and agitated, clung round Marshall's neck, and entreated to be taken away. "Anywhere, anywhere, dear Marshall," was her reply, when he ventured to ask whither she desired to go — "anywhere, so that I am with you, and away from that hideous creature."

"What's that she says?" exclaimed the giantess, on whom the latter part of Charlotte's appeal had not been lost. "Away from that hideous creature?" And who is the hideous creature, ma'am? Is it a respectable woman like me, well put on, and honestly married—to her sorrow be it spoken!—or a tattered trollop that comes bouncing through a fair, chased by half-a-dozen fellows all at once, to throw herself into the arms of another woman's lawful husband? Hideous creature, indeed! Fire and fury, but I could find in my heart to toss that scarecrow carcass of yours over the balustrade. Howsoever, it comes to this: Do you mean to send your miss about her business, Mr. Jones, or am I to send you packing? for one thing or

the other will happen, you may depend upon it."

"Hark you, mother," exclaimed Marshall, affecting in his turn to wax warm: "keep a civil tongue in your head anyhow, and don't give names to other people before you know whether they deserve them. It may happen that this poor girl has just as much claim upon me as you have, and just as good a right to call herself an honest woman. I tell you, she's my sister. Don't you hear how she speaks to me? Look up, Charlotte, love, and tell Mrs. Jones the truth. Are you not my sister,—my dear, dear sister? Am not I your brother?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" exclaimed Charlotte, conscious only that some disguise was necessary, and that without practising it there was a hazard of being separated from Marshall. "You are everything in the world to me—father, mother, brother, everything; for you I live, for you I am willing to die."

"Nay, if that be it," observed the giantess, moving a little to one side, and pushing forward a lamp that she might examine the contour of Charlotte's countenance more narrowly. "If she be indeed your sister, why didn't you say so? But I doubt she is not: I

see no resemblance between you at all; and her manner of addressing you at first was scarcely such as sisters are accustomed to employ towards their brothers."

"I tell you, mother," cried Marshall, withdrawing from Charlotte's embrace, and confronting the virago with the air of a man who feels himself insulted, "that I won't put up with such treatment any longer. Here have I been, for six months, as true to you as ever slave to his mistress; and I have had as my reward the constant infliction of injuries like this. But this far surpasses them all. You know under what circumstances I left home, and that my family was reduced by the same misfortune that broke me down; and now, when I meet my youngest and favourite sister, a wanderer and an outcast, you fly into a passion and threaten Lord knows all what, because I am willing to afford her shelter for her head. Speak out, Charlotte, dear, and tell this angry woman what brought you here: was it not in search of me that you quitted your mother's roof?"

"It was, it was, Marshall!" answered Charlotte, now looking up; "but I did not leave my mother's roof—the workhouse!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Marshall, striking

his hands together with well-acted sorrow, "and has it come to this? My poor old mother and all her children reduced to seek shelter in the workhouse?"

"Now don't take on so, Bill, dear," interposed the giantess, her features becoming even more hideous under the influence of compassion than of anger. "Haven't I told you a thousand times to forget past sorrows, and to find consolation with one who has only one wish upon earth—to make you happy? Your sister shall be welcome to stay with us as long as she pleases;—ay, and a nice pretty creature she is! Come and kiss me, my dear, and dry those pretty eyes. We'll make you happy, depend on it. I say, Tom, go and fetch the gin-bottle: the girl seems faint—she'll be the better for a dram."

Charlotte cast an imploring glance towards Marshall, and perceiving from the peculiar expression of his countenance that she was expected to fall in with the humours of her new protectress, she did not even shudder while the enormous animal encircled her in an embrace more akin to the hug of a Polar bear than to the salutation of a Christian. Of the gin, however, she positively refused to par-

take; indicating only that she was anxious to lay down her weary head in some place where the tumult of the fair might not reach her. Nor, indeed, were her own declarations necessary to convince even the ogress of the deplorable state to which fatigue and anxiety had reduced her.

"But you will not leave me, Marshall!" continued the heart-broken creature, when the being who seemed to control both his fate and her own consented to her removal to the inn where the company put up. "I could not survive the night were you to abandon me. There is no face here except yours that I recognise; there is no one that cares for me. Rather let me stay here all night, than be required to go where you are not, even if I die before morning."

"You wouldn't have your brother sleep with you, child?" demanded the giantess, half jocularly, half in anger.

"Such brothers and sisters have been known to do as much ere now," observed the tambour-beater, thrusting his tongue in his cheek. But he had immediate cause to repent of the insinuation; for the giantess, seizing a wooden roller that happened to lie within reach, lent

him such a blow upon the head, that in spite of the protection afforded by a stuffed silk cap, it felled him to the floor.

“Take that, you saucy-tongued jackanapes!” said she; “and as to you, child, your brother shall go with you, and stay with you too. When that addle-pated fool gets up again, he shall be promoted for one evening to the post of honour; while you, Bill, conduct your sister to the Swan, and take every care of her. But mind, I expect to find you ready to give me your company when we shut up shop. The poor thing must be sound asleep long before midnight; and I take it midnight will scarcely see us out of this, particularly after so long an interruption. So pop out quickly by the trap-door; and see, wrap this shawl round the young creature’s shoulders. My bonnet won’t fit her, otherwise she might have that too. But we can get her own repaired, I dare say, in the course of to-morrow; and then we shall have time, too, to consider how she may be made serviceable to the concern. These sweet eyes and these pretty features want only a little colour to make them a show of themselves. Get her a good supper, Bill, and tell the chambermaid to provide the best bed in the house. Good night, dear!—you and I will be good

friends yet, depend on it; for I will love you for your brother's sake." So saying, the giantess again saluted Charlotte, who, rather borne than led by Marshall out of the caravan, was conducted without difficulty through the crowd towards the village.

"And now, dearest Marshall," said she, when she found herself alone with him in a neat little parlour of the inn, "do tell me how it is that I find you thus. I know that many of the fantasies in which I used to indulge are faded; but as I never loved you except for your own sake, their departure has not cost me one pang: yet I am strangely bewildered by all that has passed to-night."

"Not more bewildered than I, Charlotte," replied Marshall, in a tone which seemed to her to have lost something of its tenderness: "the whole thing indeed is to me a mystery that I cannot solve. In the name of fate, how came you to think of seeking me out at all, and to find me too where you did?"

"Seek *you*, Marshall,—seek *you* out! I have done so in my waking thoughts and in my sleeping dreams ever since that night on which we parted. I have seen no object but you; I have heard no sounds but those of your voice; my very babe I have left behind, be-

cause I could not carry it. Do not ask me why I have done this, for your own heart can answer."

"I wish it had been otherwise, though," replied Marshall. "If you had had a little patience, things might have righted themselves; and you had my assurance that, whenever they did right, I would return to claim you. But you have got me into a scrape now, from which there are no means of escape except one. That fury has me in her power. She is a sharp-witted devil, too; and though the drink and her own perverseness have contributed to blind her for an hour or two, she will see clearly enough how the land lies by-and-by. Therefore I must make the most of my time, by starting for town in the coach, of which I now hear the guard blowing his horn."

"You will not abandon me again, Marshall!" exclaimed Charlotte wildly; "you will not leave me here, alone, unfriended, miserable. Oh, take me with you! I care not how you use me, so that I do but see you; I care not what language you apply to me, so that I hear you speak; I care not what my fate may be, so long as you share it with me. Marshall, I will be your slave;—trample on

me, beat me, abuse me; only do not, do not leave me again!"

"Silly girl!" answered Marshall, on whom, however, the energy of her manner had manifestly produced an effect; "are you in a condition to travel? How could you survive the fatigue of such a journey, after all that you have gone through to-day? Rather trust to my honour; and while I leave you my address, with the means of paying your fare in the morning if you need it, let me go alone to-night. A few hours' sleep will restore you, and we will be sure to meet to-morrow."

"I am fresh, I am perfectly fresh!" shrieked Charlotte, while she sprang to her feet; "I have sustained no fatigue. To the end of the world I will travel, provided you are my companion. But to lose you again,—no, Marshall, no, not even for one hour will I consent to that! Take me with you, or see me die at your feet."

"Well, then, if it must be so," replied he, "at least swallow a glass of wine ere we set out." He rang the bell and ordered a pint of sherry. He poured out a large glass, and handed it to Charlotte, who drank it off eagerly. He filled another: she would have refused;

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but he pressed it upon her, and she obeyed. A third was taken under similar circumstances, without one morsel of solid food having passed her lips since an early hour in the morning. This was too much; the poison—for in her situation it acted as such—did its work. Her brain swam round; her speech faltered; she staggered in her gait; sickness followed, and she became unconscious in his arms. He laid her gently down upon the sofa, and by some extraordinary impulse guided, felt her pockets—they were empty. A cold smile passed over his features. "No, no, poor devil!" said he aloud, "it shan't be said that I left you destitute: here is enough, and more than enough, to carry you back to Waltham." As he uttered these words, he slid a small green purse, containing one gold and a few silver coins, into her bosom, and turning upon his heel, quitted the apartment.

"Anybody for London?" shouted the coachman.

"One outside passenger," was the answer; after which Marshall sprang upon the roof, and the vehicle drove off.

CHAPTER IV.

FRIENDS IN NEED.

"WHERE am I?" cried Charlotte, as the shaking of a rude hand brought back the sense of existence without restoring the faculties to their tone,—“Where am I? and where, where is Marshall?”

“Where are you?” answered a loud and harsh voice: “where the devil should you be but in the Black Swan at Sittingbourne? But where is my husband? what have you done with him, she-devil that you are?—where is Bill Jones?”

“Who is Bill Jones?” demanded Charlotte, raising herself on one elbow, while with the other hand she rubbed her eyes and shook aside the tresses from her brow.

“There’s a pretty question for a sister to put!” replied the giantess, who, with her *corps dramatique*, stood round the poor girl’s couch. “A pure chaste sister sure, that doesn’t

know her own brother's name ! But it won't do, minx—not a bit of it : tell what you have done with my Bill, or, by the living jingo, I'll shake the life out of you !”

The monster seized her by the hair as she uttered this, and dragged her from the sofa to the floor. Charlotte shrieked aloud ; while Tom, the tambourine-beater, hastily interfering, implored his mistress to control her fury.

“ We'll have the devil to pay in five minutes : the constables are in the house at this moment ; and if the girl scream again, a month at the treadmill will be the least we shall get by it.”

“ Curse the constables ! curse the magistrates ! curse the treadmill ! curse everything !” exclaimed the infuriated giantess : “ I tell you, I'll tear her limb from limb if she don't tell me this instant what she has done with my husband !”

“ Indeed, indeed,” cried Charlotte, terrified out of all self-command, “ I cannot answer that question. I do not know who your husband is, nor where he has gone ; I assure you I do not : I would tell you if I could.”

“ Now isn't that enough to provoke a saint !” roared out the giantess ; “ don't know my husband—don't know your own brother ! I ask you where is Bill Jones ?”

"I know nobody of the name ; believe me, I don't."

"What ! not know him as took you into the caravan, and brought you here ?"

"Oh, you mean Marshall !—my Marshall ! Pray, pray, if you have any pity in you, tell me where he is. Ah ! I remember now ; he did not wish to carry me with him—I was to wait here till to-morrow—he would leave me his address. Where is it, woman ?—you have stolen it from me ; where is it, I say ?"

Charlotte sprang to her feet as she uttered this, and put her hand first into her pockets, and then into her bosom. From the latter she drew out the purse. "What is this ?" cried she. "Money ! I had no money. Who gave me this ? Oh, I see, I see ! Let me pass, inhuman monster !—I say, let me pass ! You shall not detain me here ; you have no authority ; I am no prisoner. You won't ?" she continued, observing that the giantess, with a devilish grin, threw herself between her and the door : "then I will see whether there is no assistance to be had elsewhere."

She sprang to the bell-rope, and ere Tom, who grasped at her arm, could restrain it, rang the bell furiously.

"Now, mother, it's no use kicking up a

row," said he, running immediately to the giantess; "the girl clearly knows as little about Bill as we do; and if it were otherwise, no good can come of a fight with all the neighbourhood. For God's sake keep quiet. If you must have that scapegrace,—and for my part, I think there be as good men as he in the world,—depend upon it, you won't get him the sooner for being a month in Canterbury gaol. And as to her, what's the use in being angry? Don't you see, that if she has been a gallivant of his'un, he has given her the go-by?"

Before the monster could reply, the landlord himself, attracted by the violence with which the bell had been rung, entered the room. He looked excessively displeased, and was proceeding to demand why such people presumed to bring discredit on his house by misconducting themselves, when Charlotte, rushing past her tormentor, grasped his arm and implored him to protect her.

"From whom, poor thing?" asked the landlord; "who presumes to offer you insult or injury under my roof?"

"She! that huge misshapen savage!" exclaimed Charlotte; "that hideous toad, that calls herself Marshall's wife, and orders me to tell whither he has gone."

"Thou chitty-faced wretch!" shrieked the ogress, "if I should hang for thee, d—n me if I don't do thy business!"

She strode towards her victim as she spoke, and in all probability would have carried her threat into execution, had not the landlord, by a sudden movement of his arm, thrust Charlotte before him outside the door and closed it. It was fortunate for both that the key happened to be on their side, and that the landlord had time to turn it ere the virago thought of resisting the latter movement; for the pull that she gave to the handle was such as caused the very hinges to shake; and her cry of disappointed rage, when the door refused to open, resembled the angry roar of a tiger.

"Go hide thyself, my dear!" exclaimed the kind-hearted landlord; "the brute will kill thee without doubt if she lay hands on thee; and I fully expect to see the panels fly in five minutes."

Neither was he deceived. Charlotte had barely time to escape down stairs, and to take shelter in the kitchen, when a kick from the foot of the giantess split the door of the apartment to shivers. But this was more than even the landlord of the Black Swan could endure. The constables were called in: they

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"Go hide thyself, my dear!" exclaimed the kind-hearted landlord; "the brute will kill thee without doubt if she lay hands on thee; and I fully expect to see the panels fly in five minutes."

Neither was he deceived. Charlotte had barely time to escape down stairs, and to take shelter in the kitchen, when a kick from the foot of the giantess split the door of the apartment to shivers. But this was more than even the landlord of the Black Swan could endure. The constables were called in: they

row," said he, running immediately to the giantess; "the girl clearly knows as little about Bill as we do; and if it were otherwise, no good can come of a fight with all the neighbourhood. For God's sake keep quiet. If you must have that scapegrace,—and for my part, I think there be as good men as he in the world,—depend upon it, you won't get him the sooner for being a month in Canterbury gaol. And as to her, what's the use in being angry? Don't you see, that if she has been a gallivant of his'un, he has given her the go-by?"

Before the monster could reply, the landlord himself, attracted by the violence with which the bell had been rung, entered the room. He looked excessively displeased, and was proceeding to demand why such people presumed to bring discredit on his house by misconducting themselves, when Charlotte, rushing past her tormentor, grasped his arm and implored him to protect her.

"From whom, poor thing?" asked the landlord; "who presumes to offer you insult or injury under my roof?"

"She! that huge misshapen savage!" exclaimed Charlotte; "that hideous toad, that calls herself Marshall's wife, and orders me to tell whither he has gone."

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mounted the staircase courageously enough, and one even ventured to unlock the fragment of the door. But when there appeared in the aperture such an apparition as the infuriated monster, now armed with the poker, the hardihood of the bravest gave way. The retreat was by many degrees more rapid than the advance, and the giantess stood on the landing-place victorious and exulting. It seemed too as if the conviction of her own triumph had in some sort appeased her fury, for she burst into a loud horse-laugh, and defying the men in office to approach at their peril, called in a more conciliating tone upon the landlord. Nevertheless, her invitation, though given with all possible cordiality, could not prevail on him to accept the proffered glass of punch; though he was enough of a diplomatist to accept, on her own terms, the peace towards which that invitation was evidently an overture.

While the landlord and his huge guest were thus negotiating matters of peace and war, Charlotte had become to the occupants of the kitchen an object not more of curiosity than of interest. The story of her ill usage in the crowd, of her extraordinary recognition of one of the showmen, and of her arrival at the inn

in his company,—of his abrupt departure, and, lastly, of the violence offered to her by the giantess,—was already current, with numerous exaggerations, throughout the house ; and to do the gossips justice, it excited in them a sincere commiseration for the poor girl's fate. Nor did her appearance in any degree tend to abate the public sympathy. Her extreme youth, added to her beauty, which, though mellowed, was not defaced by all that she had undergone, affected the men with a degree of admiration not far removed from passion ; while the women, regarding her as the victim of perfidy and broken vows, seemed as if they did not know how sufficiently to assure her of their pity. To all this, however, Charlotte was, if not inattentive, absolutely indifferent. She thanked those around her earnestly, accepted their marks of kindness with gentleness,—but neither entered, nor pretended to enter, into their feelings.

“Can you tell me whither he has gone?” was the sole reply which she made to the well-intentioned invectives which they heaped upon her betrayer : “He said he would leave his address, and I am sure he did so, seeing that the wine proved too much for my feeble frame, and rendered me incapable of travelling. But it is gone ; and if any of you have it, oh,

give it back to me, and take all that I have in exchange."

"Poor thing, poor thing!" exclaimed the cook, as she hastened to bring forth from her own private store a cold fowl denuded of only a single wing; "he's gone, that you may depend on. These men are all faithless; there's not one on 'em to be trusted. But that needn't keep you from eating a bit of supper; and you shan't be charged for it a halfpenny, for this is my perquisite: so sit and eat, and welcome."

"And here's some wine," cried the head-waiter, running to his peculiar cupboard and producing a bottle. "It's no use refusing to support nature; that won't mend the matter, at all events. Howsomever, I don't think any of us has his address, if he did leave one. But if you'll just rest satisfied till Roger the coachman comes back—and he returns to-morrow night—he'll tell you where he put him down anyhow; and mayhap you may be able to trace him for yourself."

"Will he, will he indeed!" cried Charlotte eagerly: "will he be able to tell me where he was put down. Oh, I will wait thankfully—that is, if you are sure we may expect to see him to-morrow morning."

"I didn't say to-morrow morning, my dear,"

replied the waiter; "I said to-morrow night: and you can go with him the night after, if you be so inclined."

"What! wait here two days and two nights without seeking Marshall! No; I will rather walk every foot of the way, and set out this instant."

"No, no, my dear, you must not talk of that," interposed a well-dressed man, who had hitherto sat apart without joining in the conversation. "I go up at eight in the morning; and if you choose to come with me, you shall have your seat for nothing; and, what's more, as I take it you're a stranger to London, you shan't be without a place to shelter you. So go to sleep to-night if you can; and Sally will call you in good time;—won't you, Sally?"

"Yes, yes," answered the individual thus appealed to, a well-dressed, smart-looking wench; "I'll call her in time: but if I was Mrs. Johnson, I don't think I should quite fancy my husband's taking such an interest in an entire stranger."

"Now, Sal, thou art a jealous toad," replied the coachman. "But no matter; thou art a kind one too. So put the girl to bed, get her up again in good time, and leave me to manage with Mrs. Johnson just as I manage with you."

Under the guidance of Sal, Charlotte, after eating rather to please her kind friends than to allay any hunger of which she was conscious, withdrew to a sleeping-room. It contained two beds, in one of which her companion usually slept; and Charlotte was well pleased when the girl announced her intention of doing so that night, if not disagreeable to the other party. Now poor Charlotte was precisely in that frame of mind when to be left entirely alone is almost sure to induce either madness or desperation. Not all the sophistry of an enamoured imagination could entirely shut her eyes to the fact that Marshall had again deserted her, under circumstances which were, to say the least of them, very suspicious. Had she, therefore, been permitted to brood over the case in absolute solitude and darkness, her own heart whispered that perhaps the worst conclusion might be drawn. For there is a power in solitude of disentangling truth from falsehood, of which those, and those alone can speak, who have tried it. Place the ruined man, for example, in a crowd, and he finds neither time nor leisure to think; give him a single companion, and even though that companion be silent, he will still see things through a flattering medium. But let him be

alone and feel that he is alone, and hope ceases to delude. So it would have been with Charlotte that night; and, with a sort of intuitive perception of her own precise state, she felt that it would have been so. Instead, therefore, of offering opposition to the proposed continuance of the chambermaid in the apartment, she expressed herself delighted with the arrangement. Nor did the effects falsify her reasoning, if such it may be called. Sal, having no cares to harass her, conversed but little after her head was once laid on the pillow; and her sleep was as sound as the labour of the body, when unaccompanied by distress of mind, never fails to produce. Yet the sound of her breathing exercised over Charlotte's fancy a mysterious control, which hindered it from conjuring up images at least of unbroken horror. She lay awake, it is true, for hours, and thought was as busy as with the miserable it always is. Nevertheless, there was a fringe of white bordering every dark image which either memory or imagination called up; and when at last Sleep laid his leaden finger on her eyelids, no hideous dreams broke in upon his sovereignty.

Charlotte had slept several hours soundly, when her companion called her, announcing

that in twenty minutes the coach would be ready to start. She rose in all haste, dressed, and hurried to the kitchen, where the friends who had behaved to her so humanely overnight were assembled to bid her God-speed. They parted from her, moreover, not with kind words only, but with kind actions. One had a bonnet at her service, in the room of that which the ruffian had destroyed overnight; another pressed upon her a warm cloak; a third offered a shawl; a fourth a handkerchief. Nor were these generous menials chary with their purses, however slenderly lined. Moreover, the landlord himself appeared in the list of those whom circumstances had interested in her favour. He came not only to bid her good-b'ye, with an assurance that to the night's lodging, and any other nourishment which she might have received under his roof, she was heartily welcome; but to tell her that she might feel perfectly secure under the protection of the coachman. "A better man doesn't drive on this road, and his wife is a most respectable person; and therefore, my dear, if you should fail in discovering your brother, or husband, or whatever he may be, my advice to you is, to take a situation in the family, provided they offer it. And I should not wonder if they did;

for no face ever spoke true if you be otherwise than honest and trustworthy."

Poor Charlotte was almost as much overcome by the unlooked-for humanity of these strangers, as she had been by the cruel treatment of those from whom they had delivered her. She wept many tears, and left few dry eyes behind when she mounted the coach-box. Nor had she any cause during the progress of the journey to find fault with the individual who had undertaken to be her protector. She had been too long unaccustomed to the slightest delicacy of bearing not to feel keenly the generous if not polished courtesies of the coachman. He made it his business to point out to her every object worthy of notice as they went along. As often as the coach stopped to change horses, he pressed her to eat or drink, and seemed disappointed that the state of her appetite was not such as to permit her complying on each occasion with his wishes. Moreover, he did his best to convey to her something like a general notion of the enormous city towards which they were hastening. She compared it with Calais, with Dover, with Canterbury: he assured her, that all of them put together would not form one of its most inconsiderable divisions.

"And how am I to find out Marshall in such a place?" demanded she eagerly.

"Indeed, my dear, that's more than I can tell," was the reply. "I only know, that unless you have his address, you may just as well look for a needle in a truss of hay, as go hunting after him through that wilderness of brick and mortar."

Charlotte was horrified; yet hope continued to whisper that all this might be exaggeration. She was sure that London could not be so large as he represented it; she was confident, that by patience and perseverance it would be possible to trace out any individual, however humble. When, however, the vehicle approached the metropolis itself—when the Bricklayers' Arms was left behind, London Bridge crossed—Fish-street entered, and she beheld around her only buildings without end, amid the intervals of which countless masses of people, carriages, waggons, and horses, were passing, her heart sank within her, and she gave up all for lost.

"Oh, I will never, never find him here!" cried she: "I am indeed destitute and forlorn. Oh that I could lie down by the way-side and die!"

"Don't say so, poor girl," exclaimed the humane coachman. "I know nothing of your

history ; I can't tell whether you be deserving of an honest man's notice, or the reverse ; but it is impossible not to feel interested in a young person evidently so forlorn, especially under the circumstances that have brought us acquainted. You shall not go without a friend, unless it be your own fault. My wife and I have been looking out some time for a person to take care of our children, and to give them a rather better education than Sue can give ; and I don't know why, but I think you would suit us very well, provided you be willing. What say you ? Will you go home with me, and try how you like the situation ? You can but leave it, after all, should it not suit."

Charlotte was wholly overpowered by this truly generous proposal. She shed tears, while she reminded her companion that he was running great risk in thus admitting into his family a perfect stranger ; and acknowledged, that no considerations of personal hazard or inconvenience would have induced her to abandon her original plans, had she not seen how useless it would be to prosecute them. She even went so far as to stipulate that they should inquire at the coach-office whether anybody there recollected Marshall's arrival, or could assist her in tracing him to his present

abode. "If this fail," added she, "and you are yet willing to receive one so destitute under your roof, I will cheerfully endeavour to instruct your children, as far as I am able, without any other remuneration than my board."

"Well then, my dear," replied the coachman, "we may consider the thing as settled; though, on the subject of remuneration, we must have a little further talk; for as to recollecting the faces of those who come and go by the coaches, depend upon it nobody at our office is either able or willing to do anything of the sort."

The coachman was not deceived in the opinion which he had formed. The clerks in the office vouchsafed no other reply to Charlotte's inquiries than a laugh; so she put her arm through that of her protector, as soon as he had settled his business, and accompanied him to his home.

CHAPTER V.

DOMESTIC PEACE.

THE house of which Charlotte was now an inmate being situated in one of the most obscure of the lanes that communicate between Bishopsgate-street and Cheapside, presented to her eyes a prospect so completely different from anything to which they had heretofore been accustomed, that at first she could not very well define the sensations to which it gave rise. Within doors there was no lack of comfort: that is to say, the parlour was neatly furnished, and the bed-rooms, though small and miserably ventilated, were clean and tidy; while everything in the style of living adopted by the family indicated a perfect exemption from penury. She found Mrs. Johnson, moreover, and her little ones, precisely such as she should have supposed the wife and children of the worthy coachman to be;—the former, a mild, cleanly, gentle-mannered person; the

latter, docile, good-tempered, and lively. And so far she could not but acknowledge that her lot had been cast for her far more favourably than the utter destitution of her circumstances could have authorized her to anticipate. Yet there was something in the closeness of the atmosphere, in the narrow and choked-up view that met her wherever she turned, that pressed upon the heart of a girl brought up in the country, and never till now thrown into the fetid atmosphere of a great city. Nor was the state of her mind without its effect in causing even these comparatively trifling evils to enlarge their powers. "Oh that I could breathe the free air of some open country!" was a frequent exclamation to which she gave utterance when alone. "These dingy walls press upon my brain. The eye is pained by their closeness: they seem to make the tooth of care sharper. They leave no room for the fancy to fly abroad. And yet, what would the widest space be to me now? Marshall is an inhabitant of this great city. We may never meet, it is true, for I am in a living wilderness—a desert of human beings; but the hope that pure accident may throw us together still supports me, and I would not exchange it for worlds. No, London is my paradise, for

it contains the single being whom my soul worships ; and I am thankful that it has afforded me so peaceful an asylum."

For several weeks the order of Charlotte's existence was so regular, that the events of one day rarely differed even in the most minute detail from those of another. Mrs. Johnson keeping a maid of all-work, she had no menial offices to perform ; except that she assisted in making her own bed and that of the children, and in preparing their food. In other respects, she acted towards them the part of a governess ; and, as she took great pains, and they soon became attached to her, the progress that they made was such as to delight their kind-hearted parents. The consequence was, that Charlotte soon began to be treated both by Johnson and his wife as a daughter ; and there came by-and-by to be but one particular about which they ever seemed disposed to fall out with her ; namely, her steady refusal of all pecuniary remuneration.

"How do you think, my dear, I can reconcile this to my own conscience?" was the substance of many a remonstrance on the part of Johnson. "Here are my little ones receiving such an education as I could not get for them at the best boarding-school in Lon-

don ; and you, who instruct them, positively refuse to be paid for your trouble. You would make me regret that I ever became acquainted with you, were it not that in all other instances I find you so much to my mind."

"And how could I, dear Mr. Johnson, reconcile it to my conscience, if I were to accept a farthing of money for doing that which only in part repays the obligations under which your great goodness has laid me? Remember how and where it was that our acquaintance began. I was a poor outcast, unknown, friendless, penniless, thrown under the most suspicious circumstances on your pity ; and yet you took me to your home, and have treated me ever since as if I had been a child of your own. Oh, never again speak of paying for services which I feel to be infinitely less important than you have a right to require, and I to offer."

And thus it was between them frequently. But Charlotte's firmness prevailed ; and even of the presents, such as a ring, a bracelet, or some other trinket, which from time to time he would have pressed upon her, she accepted only a small portion. A wardrobe, indeed, she could not refuse or decline ; yet even in that she insisted that as much economy would be prac-

tised as was at all consistent with the good couple's notions of what was due to themselves.

It was Johnson's custom to give his wife and children an annual treat, by carrying them once during the Christmas holidays to witness a play and a pantomime at Drury-Lane or Covent-Garden. For reasons which have never been very satisfactorily explained, it used to be the custom, at that season of mirth, to indulge the holiday-folks with some peculiarly lugubrious piece, as a sort of set-off to the fun and frolic of the pantomime. Modern improvements have, however, broken in somewhat on that custom; so that Shakspeare's choicest plays are sometimes made to stand in the foreground of a picture, of which *Mother Goose*, or *Jack and the Bean-Stalk*, fill up the details. It chanced that at the period of this annual recreation, when the question began to be mooted on what night it would be most convenient to go, the eldest of the children, who had been reading with her governess *Romeo and Juliet*, discovered by a play-bill that she might, if her father were so disposed, witness its representation. To Johnson himself all plays were pretty much alike. He admired the scenery, he relished the music of the orchestra, he liked the singing; but as to the

acting, being no judge of such matters, he generally got very tired of it ere the performance came to an end. When, therefore, his daughter presented her petition, it was at once succeeded to; and Charlotte became, of course, included in the number on whom the treat should be bestowed. Charlotte was nowise averse to the proposal: she doted on the play as a subject of study in private; she anticipated from the spectacle of its performance a still higher species of delight,—if, indeed, those feelings deserve to be pronounced delightful which rob us of our peace by their violence. With more of satisfaction, therefore, than she had experienced for many months, she set about the task of preparing herself and her young charges for the evening; and when the hackney-coach drove up in which they were to travel, she entered it with a step almost joyous. Neither were her sensations different when, after a considerable squeeze, she found herself seated on one of the middle rows in the pit of Covent-Garden. With all that she beheld around her she was enchanted: the spacious area, the lofty ceiling, the magnificent decorations, the brilliancy of the lights, all dazzled and confounded her; while the crash of the orchestra passed through her veins like elec-

tricity, inasmuch as this, with everything that she saw and heard, was new. But when the curtain rose and the performance began, Charlotte's whole soul was entranced: she followed the actors in every movement, she drank in every syllable as it was uttered: the tears forced themselves in streams from her eyes; and while she imagined that she was weeping over the imaginary sorrows of Juliet, it was with her own that memory was busy.

Such was Charlotte's state—a state in which her pupils to a considerable extent participated—when a sudden rush at the doors warned the experienced in such matters that half-price had begun. If Johnson's party heeded the movement at all, it was to lament that their attention should be called away even partially from the stage; for not once were their eyes withdrawn from what was before them, though the sense of hearing necessarily served them less accurately. It was not, therefore, till the drop-scene fell that the increased pressure occasioned by so excessive an influx of spectators was adverted to. Then, however, Charlotte, who had placed the children between her and their mother, while Johnson, as all good husbands ought to do, sat beside his wife, felt that she was narrowed in her room. She uttered no

complaint, well knowing that complaint would have been useless; neither did she endeavour to relieve herself by pressing upon the children; but in a gentle tone besought the individual next to her, a well-dressed female, to spare her as much as possible. The lady turned round, and presented to Charlotte's observation a strikingly beautiful countenance, except that the expression of the eye was of violent passions indulged, and the cheeks were evidently rouged.

"Spare you, ma'am! I should like to know how I can do that. Don't you see how I am squeezed up myself, like a well-sucked orange?"

"Whom have you got there, Bell?" said a voice from behind which caused every pulse in Charlotte's frame to throb. She started to her feet, turned round, saw that it was Marshall, and gasped for breath. She would have fallen indeed, had not he sprung forward to save her; for recognition took place as immediately on his part as on hers; and there was that in the circumstances of their meeting which threw even him off his guard, causing him, if not to feel, at least to act as if he felt.

"Good God, Charlotte! can I believe my senses?" said he in a whisper. "How extraordinary is all this! But for Heaven's sake

compose yourself; think where we are—be calm; this is worse than the affair of Sittingbourne a thousand-fold,—that is, we are much more public.”

And Charlotte did command herself wonderfully. So complete, indeed, was the control which she exercised over her feelings, that except by the female to whom Marshall originally addressed himself, the real cause of her agitation was unobserved; for the Johnsons readily attributed the circumstance to feelings of which they had noticed the excitement, operated upon by the pressure of a great crowd and a suffocating atmosphere. As soon, therefore, as she had resumed her seat, the little bustle ceased, and the raising of the curtain sufficed to turn towards the stage eyes which, from the best motives, might have otherwise watched her by far too keenly.

But what to her was now the stage, with the mockery of grief which it exhibited! They were as nothing: she saw them not, she heard no sound except that of the low soft whisper with which Marshall assured her of his delight at seeing her again; and when he proposed that they should meet on the morrow in some place where they might converse unrestrained, her very soul spoke the assent which her lips

scarce dared to utter. It was accordingly arranged that the meeting should occur about noon, opposite to the western gate of St. Paul's; after which Marshall ceased to address her. He had given utterance to the words "God bless you!" of which, however, she took no particular heed. But when she turned her head to see whence this sudden silence arose, she found that he was gone. He had quitted the house immediately; and she again felt that she was alone.

It is not worth while to give any further account of the manner in which the evening was spent. The young people, passing lightly, as young people are wont to do, from grave to gay, laughed loud and shouted at the knocks and kicks bestowed upon the clown, and the transformations accomplished by virtue of Harlequin's wand. Neither were their parents indifferent spectators. But to Charlotte the whole thing brought misery unspeakable. She longed to be in absolute seclusion; she pined to hold converse with her own thoughts apart from all danger of interruption, and, shutting out every external object, to dwell upon the single image that ever occurred to her mind with a power that defied control. Yet, engrossed as she was with these considera-

tions, it had not escaped her notice that the female to whom Marshall had spoken did not continue to retain her place for any length of time after he went forth. On the contrary, she also had withdrawn unattended, as if some secret understanding existed between them, and the one had obeyed a signal that emanated from the other. Of course, such an idea brought with it torture of the most exquisite kind. This was a case widely different from that of the giantess. This woman was beautiful—very beautiful! Her manners, to be sure, were bold—perhaps indelicate: but what then? It might be that Marshall was of a disposition to grow weary of the meekness that characterised her own bearing, and to be permanently retained in bondage only by one who made him feel his fetters. Oh! what if it were so! what if this woman had supplanted her in his affections! The thought was madness; she could not dwell upon it and live; she forcibly expelled it from her mind, and debarred it from returning.

The long, tedious, tumultuous pantomime came to an end at last; and the Johnsons, young and old, weary and weak with laughing, prepared to return home. It was a grievous tax upon Charlotte that she was compelled not only to listen to the criticisms of her

friends, but to express, as often as appealed to, an opinion of her own; nor did she succeed in escaping from the ordeal, except by hastily stating that which changed their mirth immediately into its opposite. She said that the noise and lights had overpowered her. Yet scarcely was this done, ere she repented of the proceeding; for so completely had she won the affections of this artless family, that from the moment they learned to consider her as an invalid all their joy vanished. Not by the old people only, but by the children, one wish seemed now to be entertained, namely, that they might get home as soon as possible, and let poor Charlotte go to bed.

"Oh, mamma, I am so sorry we went to the play!" cried the eldest daughter.

"I don't think it was the play, Mary," replied her little sister; "I think it was that nasty pantomime, with the constant strumming of the fiddles, and the singing and dancing upon the stage. I am sure I wish they never would act pantomimes any more."

Charlotte was much moved by these proofs of their attachment, than which it would be hard to find in any circle greater. She had not lived long in the world, it is true; and her intercourse with society amounted to nothing:

but there was an intuitive perception of things within which told her, that no surer testimony can be borne to the depth of human love, than is afforded by the suppression of our own joy, lest it should jar against the feelings of a friend in affliction. Nor was the conviction that she possessed the unfeigned love of the little circle which regarded her as its chief ornament without a consoling influence even now. Though, therefore, her utmost exertions failed to bring back the conversation to the light and laughing tone which at first characterised it, she not only strove to withdraw from it the damp of which she had been the unwilling cause, but in some degree adopted into her own manner a portion of the gaiety which characterised theirs. Nay, nor did the charm wholly lose its influence after her head was laid on the pillow, and silence prevailed around her.

“What will to-morrow bring forth?” was the question which she naturally put, and she answered it thus:—

“I cannot tell. It may give me back that on which my heart is fixed, or it may prove to me how cruelly I have suffered my feelings to delude me; yet, in either case, ought I to despair? Oh, no, no! There are those who

care for me still. In this family I am an object of interest ; why should I give up all as lost even if he abandon me ?"

Had Charlotte learned in early life to pray, she would have found one more ground of confidence and consolation : and that, without doubt, aided by the thought of which she thus drew the picture, would have upheld her. But she had never learned to pray. Not even sorrow had driven her to seek for comfort in a religion which from her infancy had been, in her hearing, a constant subject of derision. Is it then to be wondered at, if all the props on which from time to time she leaned should have proved no better than reeds, and shivered in her hand ?

Charlotte lay long awake, but she slept at last. Her dreams were, however, painfully vivid ; and she arose next morning, feverish, anxious, nervous, excited, and uneasy.

CHAPTER VI.

RENEWED ACQUAINTANCE.

"You look ill this morning, my love," said Mrs. Johnson, when Charlotte joined her at breakfast: "I fear you have had a bad night. We must not allow one so delicate to expose herself again to the tumult and bustle of a theatre."

"I am not well," replied Charlotte; "indeed, I am much the reverse. But a solitary walk about noon will, I think, recruit me;—that is, provided I may beg the favour of you to take charge of the young people for a couple of hours."

"For the whole day, my love, if it will be of the smallest use to you. Nay, I insist upon it," continued the good woman, perceiving that Charlotte was prepared to resist the arrangement. "I know from experience what it is to exchange all at once the pure air of the country for this smoky and confined

atmosphere: so don't make any excuses to me, for I won't receive them. Spend this day exactly as you please; but the children are my charge—that's fixed, and neither argument nor entreaty shall alter the arrangement."

Charlotte could only look the thanks which she possessed no power of language to express. Neither did she so far abuse the kindness of her protectress as to resist her inclination. On the contrary, though quite indifferent as to the rest of the day, so long as an hour or two at noon were at her own disposal, she consented to leave the young folks with their mother, and retired to her own room, there to arrange her thoughts previous to the meeting in which she believed the destiny of her future life to be somehow mixed up.

When a girl of eighteen, particularly one circumstanced as was Charlotte, sits down to arrange a plan of operations in an interview which she is preparing to hold with her lover, her situation is not unlike to that of the condemned criminal, who tries to reason himself into a spirit of becoming resolution, in order that his last appearance in public may not belie the character which his previous career may have earned. If his nerves be callous, naturally callous, he may succeed in affecting

the stoic : if the contrary be the case, however magnanimous his resolutions beforehand, the immediate prospect of the gibbet is sure to scatter them into thin air. So it was with Charlotte. While alone in her room, counting the moments as they crept onward, she endeavoured to argue herself into the assumption of dignity and composure, by dwelling on the acts for which she ought to demand a full explanation, and reverting to the more than independence—to the positive comfort and respectability of the position in which she actually stood. But as the chime of quarter after quarter tolled forth by the neighbouring clock warned her how fast time was running, the rate at which her courage oozed out surprised even herself. At last it struck half-past eleven. She rose trembling and unnerved from her seat ; cast a cloak round her shoulders, and drew a bonnet on her head, with hands that shook so violently as almost to defeat their own purposes ; and walked abroad as weak, as pliable, and as frail, as she was when Marshall first won her heart, and established, by the abuse of his power, an absolute ascendancy over her fate.

The clock of St. Paul's indicated that she was before her time by something more than

ten minutes, when Charlotte arrived at the appointed place of meeting. Marshall was not there ; nor indeed, when she looked to the dial-plate, did she experience either surprise or mis-giving that it was so. On the contrary, she blamed herself for her impatience, while she continued to walk to and fro, never passing beyond eye-shot of the western door of the cathedral. She had paraded her round several times, when a well-dressed man approached her.

"May I supply his place, love?" said he, as, moving forward, he extended to her his hand.

She was startled by the movement ; but, in utter ignorance of what it could mean, she placed her hand in his.

"Shall I accompany you home?" was his next address, "or will you put yourself under my guidance?"

"I really have not the pleasure to know you, sir," replied Charlotte, gently disengaging her hand from that which still grasped it ; "neither am I going home immediately ; but if you happen to be an acquaintance of Mr. Johnson, and have seen me in his company, it will perhaps be right to tell you that I am here on private business, and that I will return as

soon as I have had a few moments' conversation with the person whom I came abroad to meet."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt, my dear," was the answer. "Your business will be private enough, I'll warrant. But he seems very dilatory. If I were you, I'd give him the slip for once, and go with me, who will not keep you waiting."

Charlotte, though sadly puzzled what to make of this style of language, would have hazarded some rejoinder, under the impression that she was really talking to a friend of the good coachman, had not Marshall himself made his appearance. The instant her eye caught his figure, she ran towards him. Her new acquaintance, however, moved as rapidly as she did; and when she stretched out her hand to clasp that of Marshall, he abruptly threw himself between.

"No, no, young lady," said he; "not quite so fanciful as all that. One at a time, if you please. First come, first served, is a rule all the world over, you know; and I must insist upon my rights, or the deuce is in it. You go with me."

"With you?" replied Charlotte. "Why should I go with you? I never saw you in my

life till five minutes ago, and now don't know by what authority you spoke to me."

"Now that's what I call good!" exclaimed her tormentor. "Didn't I meet you here by express appointment? and am I to be fudged off at this rate, do you think?"

"Charlotte," said Marshall solemnly, "what does this mean? What am I to understand by finding you in company with a stranger?"

"I, Marshall—I in company with a stranger!" cried Charlotte. "Oh, you are mocking me! You know that I never associate with strangers; and this gentleman knows also that he spoke to me for the first time in his life just before you came up, because he saw me walking backwards and forwards as if I was waiting for somebody."

"Never mind where it was that I first spoke to you, my dear," answered the stranger; "but so far I will bear you out—I certainly spoke to you a few minutes since, because I did fancy that you were waiting for some one, and that that some one was myself."

"You!" exclaimed Charlotte. "How could I wait for you? You are a perfect stranger to me, and I presume that I am equally strange to you. This is worse than mockery."

"Well, sir," said Marshall, addressing himself to the strange gentleman, while his countenance assumed an expression which Charlotte found herself unable to interpret, "it is clear that there is some mistake. This young lady is a friend of mine. I must believe that her meeting with you has been accidental, and I must therefore beg that you will not annoy her by pressing your company where it is clearly not desired."

"If the young lady will say as much herself," answered the stranger sternly, "I will obey her; but from you, depend upon it, I will take no such order of dismissal."

"Then, sir, I tell you at once, that as I never desired to have your company, so you will oblige me much by withdrawing it," answered Charlotte proudly.

The stranger made a low bow when Charlotte ceased speaking, and walked away; not, however, without exchanging a glance of peculiar meaning with Marshall. Meanwhile the latter, drawing his companion's arm under his own, led her towards the more public thoroughfare.

"This is no fit place for our conference," said he; "we must seek one more retired. Whither shall we go?"

"Be you the guide, Marshall," said she timidly, for her heart misgave her, she scarce knew why. "London is yet strange to me; and as to private places, I have seen none such since I entered it."

"Well, then, I will take you to a spot which will bring all your country recollections fresh into your mind. But it is too distant for you to reach on foot, so we will drive thither."

He called a coach, handed Charlotte in, and desired the man to drive to the Regent's Park. The vehicle proceeded slowly; upon which he thrust his head out of the window, and in a sharp tone reproved the coachman. Yet when his orders were obeyed, and the frequent application of the lash to the horses' flanks bore testimony to the zeal of the charioteer, his good humour did not seem to return; he was silent, reserved, almost distant. Poor Charlotte could not endure this state of things many minutes; she burst into tears, and, hiding her face in her hands, sobbed audibly.

"What is the matter, Charlotte?" demanded Marshall peevishly. "We don't often meet now; but whenever we do, you contrive to make the meeting as little agreeable as possible. For my part, I have no fancy for beauty in tears."

"Then I will suppress mine as soon as I am able," replied she. "But can you wonder that I should weep? Are not my circumstances greatly changed for the worse since we first became acquainted; and have you, Marshall, treated me in all respects as I deserved? Why have you twice abandoned me? and the last time—oh, I cannot venture to think of it!"

"Was that my fault? If a glass of wine affected you so much as to render you incapable of travelling, how could I help it?" demanded Marshall. "And yet you cannot say that I abandoned you: you were penniless when you reached Sittingbourne; did not I leave you the means of following me, had you been so disposed?"

"And I did follow; though my search proved fruitless, because you neglected to give any clue by which to trace you out."

"Well, well, it's no use wrangling," answered Marshall. "We did not meet to upbraid one another, I suppose;—a very useless mode of communication under any circumstances, and in our particular case worse than useless. You say you followed me immediately to town; where have you been living ever since, and how have you employed yourself?"

"I have been living with the kindest and best people that ever walked the earth," replied she eagerly. Oh, if you knew them, Marshall!—if you could but know how generously, how nobly they have behaved to me!"

"Indeed! and who may they be?"

"His rank in life is not very elevated, but his heart would do honour to any station; and she is as kind to me as if I were her daughter."

"Well, but who are they, and how do you recompense them for all this generosity?"

"His name is Johnson. He drives one of the Dover coaches. He found me where you left me, in utter destitution; he brought me up to town, offered me an asylum in his house, and has been to me ever since like a father. The only recompense that I could make this amiable couple, I have made: I take care of their three children, and instruct them."

"Capital!" cried Marshall, laughing loud, but, as it appeared to Charlotte, not very naturally. "This is promotion indeed! Charlotte Amos is then a nursery-governess in the family of a stage-coachman!"

"She is striving to prove herself not ungrateful to those who gave her a home when she most needed it, and were too noble-minded

to allow their better feelings to be overpowered by the worse than suspicious circumstances in which our acquaintance began."

"Be it so, love," said he, in a softer tone, after a brief pause had occurred in their conversation: "neither am I at all disposed to blame you for what has happened. Since you did accept the protection of these strangers, you were bound to make them some amends; and you have done so to such purpose, that the balance of obligation is now, I take it, on your side. However, this sort of thing won't do any longer."

"What sort of thing?" demanded Charlotte: but before he could reply, the coach stopped, and the driver indicating that they were in the Regent's Park, requested to be informed whither he should next direct his course. He was commanded to let down the steps, received his fare, and dismissed.

"Look round, Charlotte," said Marshall, after they had alighted, and had traversed a portion of the road that leads towards the Zoological Gardens: "though you see it in the dead of winter, is not this like a scene in a fairy-land?"

"It is indeed most beautiful," replied she, as she gazed with delighted eye over the wood

and water, the sloping uplands and smooth green lawns, by which that fairest of suburban landscapes is diversified. "And these houses, surely they must belong to the great men of the land? each resembles a palace."

"How should you like to live here?" demanded Marshall.

"If with you," replied she, "it would be a paradise; if without you, I could take no pleasure in it."

"Dearest Charlotte," said he, pressing her hand affectionately, "this is no time to hold back from you a knowledge of the truth. You have seen me of late under such new and extraordinary circumstances, that to refrain from unbosoming myself, even though the tale must shock you, would indicate a total want of confidence on my part in your firmness and affection.—I am in such difficulties, that from day to day, and from hour to hour, my very life is threatened. Speculations in which I engaged too rashly have failed. Negotiations which I was carrying on, so help me Heaven! with the most upright and honest views, have taken such a turn as to render me a suspected traitor; and I am now skulking about, as you find me, to avoid an arrest, which would certainly lead to a trial, and probably to a public execu-

tion. Still, I am not without friends—great and powerful friends. But the great require constant stimulating. No man need expect to possess their favour long, who is not in a condition to promote either their interests or their pleasures. Now I cannot, circumstanced as I am, promote any man's interests ; I do not know that I can administer to any one's pleasures. What I want, therefore, is the assistance of some being who would act with me and for me, without hesitating as to the means, so long as the end were obtained, of securing the steady and cheerful assistance of one who, if he be willing, possesses ample power to set me square with the world. Am I counting too much on your love, when I ask you to devote yourself for a time to my preservation ; so that, when the cloud passes away, we may be able to spend the remainder of our lives together ?”

“ Have I any desire for life, except that it may be devoted to your service ?” demanded the impassioned girl. “ Only say how I can promote your welfare, and there is nothing that I will not attempt—there are no privations to which I will not submit, in order to accomplish that purpose.”

“ Ay, but the sort of sacrifice which I am

going to require at your hands is something on which, I venture to say, you have never counted; and yet, if it be not made, the consequences may be terrible."

"What is it, Marshall?" cried she eagerly; "speak out, and do not fear my willing and cheerful acquiescence. If by performing the most menial offices I can forward your views, to me the offices will be full of dignity. If by personal labour I can deliver you from your difficulties, I will work till this body fail, and die happy in the thought that life was sacrificed for you. Speak out, then,—tell me what it is you wish; and be assured that, if my powers extend so far, you shall not be denied."

"Charlotte," said he with great solemnity, while he stopped and fixed his large dark eye on hers; "do you love with such unbounded devotion, as that you are ready to obey my wishes even though they revolt against all the prejudices which you may have cherished from your infancy?"

"Can you doubt it?" replied she: "Have I not given proof enough how lightly character, reputation, and the world's esteem, weighed against the wishes of him to whom I had given my heart."

“ Well, then, I will speak out at once. You see that large house among the trees? it is owned by the noble friend of whom I have spoken, and on whose exertions all my prospects depend. He has seen, and passionately admires you;—nay, don't start, my sweet love,—I do not ask you to give your heart to the keeping of any one except myself; that is mine, and mine only. But, under our circumstances—when we cannot live together—when my fortunes, my rank in society, my life itself, depend on conciliating a particular person; and above all, when I give my consent—nay, when I beg of you, as a favour done to myself, that you would overcome your own scruples, pledging my honour that when the fitting time comes you shall be released from bondage, and taken to the arms of one who will only love you the more for what you have undergone,—I do think that, under these circumstances, your consenting to live with him for a few months, or at the most a single year, could not lower you in your own estimation, as it will certainly not sink you in mine. What say you, dearest? I await your decision with an anxiety which I have no words to express.”

“ That this is indeed a blow for which I was not prepared,” answered the unhappy girl,

withdrawing her arm from that of Marshall, and letting her head drop on her bosom. "Oh, I have dreamed of much—much of misery and degradation! I have seen myself an outcast and a beggar; dragging out existence for a while by asking alms of strangers, and dying at last in the kennel: but to have such a proposal made to me, and by you, Marshall!—Oh, I never, never thought it would come to this!"

"Then you will not comply with my request?" demanded Marshall sternly: "you are too pure to keep house for a nobleman of the first rank, as your mother kept house for a Kentish yeoman, even though by doing so you might acquire ample wealth for yourself, and put me in a position to marry you when your term of bondage was over?"

"How am I fallen! how have I been deceived!" exclaimed Charlotte, with more of energy than she had yet displayed. "I tell you no, Marshall! not to save your life would I stoop so low! By passion, by misplaced affection, I may have been misled; but to become an object of barter—No, no, no! rather let me perish!"

She turned from him as she spoke, and had walked several paces back in the direction from which they came, ere he recovered from the

surprise with which her firmness had affected him. He followed, however, and was not slow in overtaking her.

“Can you believe, Charlotte, that I was in earnest?” cried he, while he took her unresisting hand, and again placed it under his arm. “Do you imagine that I had any other object in view than to try you? Consider where it was that we met last night—consider how you were occupied when I joined you this morning—and then ask yourself whether I had not reason to be uneasy on your account, and anxious on my own. The pit of a theatre is not the place where modest women usually resort; neither is it customary to shake hands and converse familiarly with strangers. I could not put the question to you directly, whether you had become one of those degraded things that walk the streets and live by their shame; yet it was necessary for my own peace that I should discover whether there was ground even for suspicion. I am now satisfied that there is none; and you—surely you know me too well to suppose that I could ever become a party to the total ruin of one to whom my troth has been so long plighted?”

Alas! there is no creature so confiding, so credulous, as the woman who has once “loved

too well." Forced as this explanation would have appeared to any one else, in Charlotte's view it was satisfactory ; and she wept for joy as she accepted it, and sealed their reconciliation with a kiss. It was accordingly settled between them that they should meet frequently. She gave him her address, to which he promised to write as soon as he should be in a condition to fix a spot for another interview ; and having conducted her as far as the corner of the street in which she dwelt, Marshall took his leave.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW PROSPECTS.

THREE days elapsed from the date of the conversation detailed above, ere the postman brought any communication for Charlotte. They were to the poor girl days of indescribable anxiety and excitement. A knock never came to the door without causing her to start; she calculated the moments between one period of delivery and another; and her general manner became so vacant, and at times so depressed, as to arouse both the regrets and the misgivings of her protectors. Mrs. Johnson, indeed, repeatedly questioned her as to the cause of so remarkable a change of behaviour, and received on each occasion the same evasive reply, that it was brought about entirely by illness; while the children, seeing her frequently in tears, shed so many themselves, that their little eyes often told a tale which their lips had not spoken. At last, however,

the long-looked-for epistle came, and Charlotte flew to devour it in her own apartment. It was brief, but not cold; and it desired her to meet the writer the same evening at eight o'clock, at the place where they had met before. Charlotte would have greatly preferred a meeting in daylight, because, inexperienced as she was, it could not fail to strike her, that the fact of her going out at night—a practice in which she had never indulged—must operate unfavourably on the minds of the Johnsons. Nevertheless, as Marshall's wishes were in this, and in everything besides, a law to her, she did not for a moment doubt as to the course which it would be necessary to pursue. She informed Mrs. Johnson of the necessity under which she lay of meeting a friend; and Mrs. Johnson, though she looked as if she regretted, did not utter a syllable in contradiction of the proceeding.

Punctual to the minute which he had himself specified, Marshall awaited her arrival in St. Paul's Church-yard. As he had done on a previous occasion, moreover, he proposed that they should remove to some place where they were less likely to attract observation; for, besides that the moon shone clear overhead, the glare of the gas-lights was of itself sufficient to ex-

pose the working of each person's countenance to such as chose to make strange faces their study. When, however, she reminded him that a protracted absence from home must, at this hour, tell against her with the Johnsons, he so far yielded to her wishes, that he contented himself by leading her round to the north side of the building, where, as there is no thoroughfare for carriages, few lamps have been set up. They had not been long in comparative darkness, ere, reverting to the reason which she had assigned for not wishing to proceed further, he asked her how she really liked her situation.

"How can I fail to like it?" replied she; "the Johnsons are everything that is kind and good, and the debt of gratitude which I owe them is one that I will never be able to pay."

"Nay, Charlotte," replied he, "there you take a wrong view of the case. That debt is more than paid already. Didn't you tell me that you had not received either salary or wages since you entered the family?"

"That may be," answered Charlotte; "but it has been my own fault entirely. They have repeatedly expressed a wish to pay for my services; but how could I accept money from

people that gave me a home when all the world besides had rejected me?"

"Now, don't imagine that I am going to quarrel with what is past, far less to put a wrong construction on the behaviour of your friends; but you must allow me, as one who takes a deeper interest in your welfare than anybody else, to have my own opinions on these points, and to offer such advice as I think your peculiar position requires. You have now been upwards of three months with this worthy couple, and they themselves admit that they have gained at least as much by you as you have gained by them. I think, therefore, that the time has come when you may, without any breach of propriety, or offering any violence to their feelings or your own, look a little to the side of your own interests. Remember that, situated as you now are, you do nothing towards securing a permanent provision for yourself. Suppose Mr. Johnson were to die, what would become of you? his widow would probably not think of educating her children as they are educated now, and you would be thrown upon the world again as a beggar. No, Charlotte, this sort of thing won't do much longer; you must look out for a better place, and I must help you to find it."

“What !” cried Charlotte, “abandon my preservers just as I am beginning to make myself serviceable to them? No, no, Marshall; you would not advise that.”

“Certainly I would not advise your abandoning them,” answered he; “if, as I presume, you mean leaving them in the lurch. But they are too much attached to you, I am convinced, to think of opposing their own views to a consideration of your permanent welfare. If, for example, a situation were to offer as under-governess, or even as lady’s-maid, in some rich family, where you would be treated with as much kindness as by the Johnsons, and receive over and above a handsome salary, I am sure your friends would never forgive either you or themselves, if they thought that any motives of delicacy hindered you from accepting it; and, as far as you are yourself concerned, I know that you would do very wrong to hesitate.”

“Well, well,” said Charlotte, smiling, “when such a thing is in my power, it will be time enough to think how it behoves me to deal with it. In the mean while, as I see no chance of a girl unknown, and unprotected, like myself, attracting the notice of any fine lady, I am quite content to remain where I am,

and to contribute all in my power to the happiness of my benefactors."

"Perhaps you leap too soon to your conclusions, my love," replied Marshall: "it does not always follow, in this great town, that persons unknown and unprotected fail of making their way into great people's families. What if it were in my power to offer you a situation now, where all, and more than all, the advantages I have hinted at would attend you?"

"I hope that it is not in your power to make the offer, dear Marshall," answered Charlotte, timidly; "because it would give me almost equal pain to accept or to reject it. I could not do the one without suffering the bitter reproaches of my own heart; and I could not, I am afraid, do the other without offending you."

"Nay, now, Charlotte, this is worse than the dream of a romancer, a thousand times. Why should your own heart reproach you for doing that of which your best friends must approve? But, to be sure, if you prefer remaining where you are, to contributing something towards the establishment of such an order of things as may eventually enable us

to live entirely for one another, I have not one word to say against it."

"What is it you would have me do, Marshall?" cried Charlotte doubtingly: "whither is it you would have me remove?"

"I would have you go to-morrow, and present yourself at number —, Grosvenor-square, and deliver this letter to the porter. It is addressed, as you will see, to the Countess of Beddington, and comes from one of her most intimate friends, recommending the bearer as a fit person to act in the capacity of lady's-maid. The countess is a good-natured, easy person, who will doubtless send for you, ask you a few questions as to where you were born and how educated, and then place you in her establishment at once: for it is a peculiarity of hers, that she prefers young, unsophisticated girls from the country, to women that may have lived with other patronesses. You need not say anything about the Johnsons, for that wouldn't tell in your favour; neither need you make her ladyship aware how long it is since you quitted Waltham: but lead her to suppose that you came to town only as it were yesterday, in consequence of the receipt of a letter from Lady Olivia Dugdale;—now don't forget the

name,—Lady Olivia Dugdale, whom your mother nursed, and who has taken a lively interest in you and your brothers and sisters in consequence. When you have thus received your admission into Grosvenor-square, you can go back for your trunk, and bid the Johnsons fare well. But mind you don't tell them where you are going; and, above all things, keep your countenance, and be very well read in your story. You will find the situation an excellent one."

"But, dear Marshall," replied Charlotte, "how can I do all this? I am not the person in whose favour this letter has been written; how can I go and palm myself off as that which I am not? and if I were to succeed, how long do you think could the secret be kept? The young woman whose testimonials you bid me use would not fail to confront me; and then in what plight should I stand?"

"Charlotte, unless you wish that you and I should cease at once to have any further correspondence, you will permit yourself to be guided in this case by my judgment. Am I urging you to incur any personal hazard? the girl for whom this letter was written has gone abroad with a different family, and will not return these three years; there cannot, there-

fore, be the slightest risk of any such collision as you seem to dread. And as to the wrong put upon others, what is it? you slip in to supply the place of one who is otherwise provided for. Your manners, your appearance, your acquirements, your conversation, are a thousand times more likely to please the countess than hers; and as you accept the trust with the full determination of discharging its duties to the letter, are not all parties benefited—is any one injured?”

“Oh, but is it not a deceit, a practical deceit, from first to last?—and the poor Johnsons——”

“Curse the Johnsons! I tell you they have made more than the worth of their hospitality out of you long ago; and were it otherwise, the choice before you is this,—whether you are to quit them, or discard me. And as to the deceit, dear girl, are you so very young as to be ignorant that the whole system of society is one continued deceit?”

“Pray, pray, don’t urge me!” exclaimed the agitated girl.

“Nay, Charlotte,” answered he, “I will not urge you; for I see that the influence which I once had over you is gone. Act as you please; go where you will, and leave me to perish.”

as she was of all religious principle, and fallen in one respect beneath her sex's pity, there had always been about Charlotte Amos an instinctive love of truth, which rendered its opposite at once difficult and odious to her. Perhaps, too, it was this very constitutional reverence for truth that had rendered her so completely the dupe of one who held it utterly at nought. Unaccustomed herself to deceive, she did not dream of suspecting others, particularly those whom she loved, of deceiving; and hence, without doubt, the excessive credulity which led her to credit every tale, no matter how improbable, of which Marshall was the author. But now, not even her love for him could blind her to the fact that she was become at his desire a party in an intrigue. How her bosom heaved as she thought of this! how her mind revolted at the idea of so much baseness, of so much falsehood!—yet she felt that the die was cast. When she laid her head on the pillow, therefore, it was with the melancholy consciousness awakened, that henceforth she must be an object of contempt to herself: and that reflection, it is scarcely necessary to add, has no tendency to make any one's slumbers refreshing.

Charlotte awoke early, and still the hideous

thought of what must happen stood foremost to her view. She had concealed the letter in a drawer over-night, and she now drew it forth and examined the superscription over and over, as if it had contained some secret meaning different from that which the words conveyed. This done, she forced herself to conjure up the scene of which Marshall had described the outlines, and to rehearse with great care the part which had been assigned to herself. Marshall had advised her to proceed to Grosvenor-square about one o'clock : it was the hour of play for the young people, so she was not obliged to deprive them of another lesson ; and, strange as it may appear, the reflection proved agreeable to her. At the appointed hour, therefore, she did go forth, and in due time stood opposite to the gate of Lady Beddington's mansion. She knocked timidly, was admitted, delivered her credentials, and sat down upon a bench in the hall. Three or four servants in livery were lounging about, and a tradesman or two seemed waiting for an audience ; yet such was Charlotte's agitation, that she neither heard the somewhat flippant remarks that escaped them, nor took any notice of the scrutiny which they bestowed upon her. At last a lackey descended the stairs with an order that the young

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person who had brought the letter would walk up. Charlotte was just sufficiently mistress of herself to comprehend the design of the message, and to obey; but when the servant ushered her through two ante-rooms, both of them gorgeously furnished, into an inner apartment or boudoir, beside a table in the centre of which Lady Beddington was writing, her resolution entirely failed: she trembled from head to foot, and would have fallen, had not the countess with great good-humour desired her to sit.

"You are the young person that brought me this letter?" said the lady, applying a glass to one of her bright hazel eyes.

Charlotte could only bow her answer, for her throat was parched, and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth.

"I see you are a good deal agitated, child," continued the really handsome and kind-hearted countess: "pray compose yourself. Lady Olivia tells me that you are quite a rustic, though a well-educated one,—and your appearance bespeaks both. How long is it since you have seen Lady Olivia,—or have you ever seen her?"

Charlotte could only stammer out a negative, which, as the truth always does, rose naturally

to her lips: and it so happened that in this instance truth did as well as falsehood.

"Ah, very well, Lucy;—your name is Lucy, I see—is it not?"

Again Charlotte bowed.

"Well, Lucy, I won't ask you any questions now. I have unbounded confidence in the judgment and discretion of your patroness, and am ready to give you a fair trial; so you may consider yourself as admitted from this day upon my establishment. Have you any luggage?—I suppose you are just from the country, and have left it at the coach-office. Tell the porter where it is, and desire him to send for it. In the mean while, ring that bell, and the servant will give you in charge of the housekeeper, who will treat you well."

"If your ladyship pleases," stammered out Charlotte, "I should like to go for it myself: I have a cousin in town."

"Oh, very well, just as you please; only the sooner you take up your residence here, the sooner you will feel yourself at home. But go for your luggage, by all means."

Charlotte did not wait for a second command, but curtseying to the ground, quitted the room. The next movement was of course to Coleman-street.

CHAPTER VIII.

RESULTS OF SKILFUL MANAGEMENT.

CHARLOTTE'S mind was a perfect chaos as she hurried along the streets. The Rubicon was indeed passed — of that she could no longer doubt; though, of the important consequences that were likely to follow, it was impossible to form an anticipation. One of these, however, did force itself into notice, because it was immediate. She must bid farewell to the Johnsons, and at a moment's warning withdraw herself from the society of persons to whom her heart told her that she owed more than to any other human beings. Nor was it only by thus abruptly withdrawing herself from beneath their roof that she must lacerate their feelings. She stood pledged to conceal from them the nature of the situation which she had accepted, as well as the name and address of the lady with whom she was henceforth to live; and the thought of thus wounding their delicacy at the

last gave a bitterness to the anticipated separation such as had well-nigh overpowered her. "Suppose she were to sacrifice her little stock of wearing apparel, and take leave of her friends by letter only," that would doubtless save the feelings of both parties; but how would it answer in reference to Lady Beddington? She had gone avowedly to bring her luggage from the coach-office; if she returned empty-handed, what would be thought of her? No: she must see the Johnsons; she must entreat them to extend to her so much of confidence still, as to believe that her removal was an arrangement drawn on by necessity, and that the reserve in which for the present her motives were wrapped up, was not less compulsory. Fortune, however, seemed for once resolved to extricate from a dilemma one whom she had often treated scurvily. When Charlotte reached home, she found that the Johnsons had gone out with the children, and that they were not expected to return till the evening. Hastily, therefore, she packed up her wardrobe; and leaving a farewell letter on the table, in which she expressed her most earnest wishes for their prosperity, she desired the maid to call a coach, and to put her trunk into it.

"Be you going to leave us, miss?" said the

wench, as Charlotte stepped into the vehicle. But no answer was awarded ; indeed the heart of the fugitive was too full to reply. The coachman drove off a little way : " Where to, ma'am ? " She told him ; and in ten minutes she was set down in Grosvenor-square ; in ten minutes more, under the especial protection of the housekeeper.

Before she laid her head upon the pillow, Charlotte was fully initiated into all the mysteries of her calling. Lady Beddington needed her assistance before dinner, and at two in the morning required to be undressed again. These were new and trying hours for Charlotte ; yet there was a kindness about her lady, an air of perfect trust and confidence, which made her feel that, were the conscience at peace, her situation would soon become agreeable in the extreme ; for Lady Beddington, like many other persons in her station of life, though gay and volatile, was the reverse of selfish. From inadvertency she might perhaps inflict an occasional wound on the feelings of her inferiors—from design never : indeed, her chief error seemed to be, that acting always a natural part herself, she could not suspect those about her of hypocrisy. The consequence was, that her domestics and dependants were treated with

a liberality which they could scarcely be expected never to abuse. To the housekeeper the care of the table was entrusted, and the uncontrolled management of all domestic concerns; to the lady's-maid, a perfect control over the wardrobe, jewel-box, and the bureau,—for even of the latter, in which her most valued correspondence was laid up, the keys were given in charge to a menial. Charlotte wondered at what her previous habits taught her to regard as excessive carelessness; yet she accepted the trust without hesitation, being fully satisfied that by her it would never be abused.

It was about noon on the very day after her establishment in Grosvenor-square, that Charlotte received an intimation that her brother was in the housekeeper's room below, and desired to see her. For an instant the inclination to deny that she had a brother in town stood uppermost in her thoughts; but it was only for an instant, for the conviction that Marshall had assumed this character in order to command frequent access to her immediately swept it away. She hurried down stairs, and entering the apartment by a door towards which her visitor's back chanced to be turned, found an opportunity, ere he was aware of her presence, to take a rapid survey of his exterior. The effect of that survey

had well-nigh been to drive her back to her own room without speaking ; for the dress, figure, and attitude of her visitor were all so strange, that she felt convinced of having been misled by her own imagination. There stood before her a young man, whose air seemed to demonstrate that he had been brought up entirely in a farm-yard, and was without an idea except such as a farm-yard may produce. His dress was a clean white smock-frock that reached to the ankles, a pair of strong heavy boot-shoes, a Belcher handkerchief, a yellow striped waist-coat, and a broad-brimmed coarse hat, which he carried in his hand. His hair, also, was of a totally different colour from that of Marshall ; and his bearing generally, if not loutish, at all events was the reverse of sprightly. Nor was the effect very different when, turning round, he displayed a countenance smooth, ruddy, and considerably more youthful than that on which she had gazed too often and too affectionately. So complete, indeed was the disguise, that she had actually retreated a step backwards, when the countryman spoke, and the tones of his voice at once betrayed him.

“ Is it so perfect, Charlotte ? ” demanded Marshall with a smile ; “ am I so thoroughly transformed, that even the eye of love fails to detect me ? ”

"Good heavens, Marshall!" exclaimed Charlotte, "what does this mean? Why do I see you here, and see you thus?"

"You see me here, love," replied he, putting his arm round her waist, and clasping one of her hands in his, "because I did not place you where you are in order that you might be beyond the reach of our meeting; and you see me thus, because it is not prudent for me to go abroad except in the shade. Have I succeeded in disguising myself?"

"So completely, that, had you not spoken, I should have gone away fully persuaded that I had been sent for by mistake."

Marshall smiled again, as he observed the sort of half-doubtful glances with which she still continued to regard him, and then went on to inquire how she liked her situation. "You find your lady all that I predicted," continued he,—"good-natured, unsuspicious, credulous, and easy to manage? You have already, I doubt not, got possession of her keys, and been installed as mistress of the wardrobe. I am sure you must now be convinced, that in reasoning you out of so many foolish scruples I did you the most essential service."

"I wish that I could feel so," replied Charlotte. "To be sure, I have made a covenant

with myself, that in no instance shall my lady find cause to regret having taken into her service one whom she never meant to engage; and so far the result may prove to her at least harmless. But can I ever cease to remember that I owe my situation to deceit, and that throughout every day I retain it the deceit is continued?"

"And what then, dear girl?" asked Marshall tenderly. "If persons be deceived into arrangements advantageous to themselves, have the deceivers any just ground of self-reproach? Lady Beddington will never suffer wrong at your hands;—nay, you are in every respect better qualified to wait upon her than the person whom you represent. Is not she, then, a gainer as well as you?"

"Perhaps so, Marshall; yet I am not the less a deceiver."

"Pooh, pooh! you must get over these weaknesses. Now tell me, how are you accommodated—how are you lodged?"

"Far better in every respect than I deserve. I have a commodious sleeping-apartment to myself, and I live with the housekeeper."

"And your duties comprehend what?"

"Dressing and waiting upon my lady, and taking charge of her jewels and apparel."

"She is rich in jewels, I suppose?" asked he carelessly.

"Very. I am no judge of these matters; but there are diamonds in one casket alone, which, as she told me herself, could not be purchased for several thousand pounds."

"How beautiful they must be, Charlotte! There is nothing in nature I admire so much as diamonds. The glitter of these precious stones dwells upon my imagination long after the vision has passed away, and carries me into a world of romance, where I live and am happy. How I should like to see the contents of that casket!"

"How I wish that all your desires could be as easily gratified. Wait here two minutes, and as my lady happens to be sitting at this moment to a portrait-painter, so is not likely to call for me, I will fetch the casket."

She ran up stairs, was absent but a few seconds, and returned again with a box, of which the key was suspended from a narrow ribbon that encircled her own neck. She unlocked and handed it to Marshall, who drew out a necklace, bracelets, ear-rings, and ornaments for the hair, on which he gazed with a degree of rapture which amused as much as it surprised his companion.

"Can the human mind conceive anything more gorgeous, more exquisitely lovely!" cried he, enraptured.

As he spoke, the hat which he continued to hold in his hand escaped from his grasp, and fell. He stooped to pick it up, turning his face away for a single moment from Charlotte; and when he rose again, shut down the lid of the casket violently, and demanded the key.

"Let me lock these treasures up," said he; "let me relieve my eyes from beholding them. They dazzle too much;—they make me mad."

"What a strange humour!" replied Charlotte laughing, while at the same time she handed him the key. "Now to me such things have no charms: it would not add to my happiness one tittle, were all the diamonds that ever came from the East poured into my lap to-morrow."

"Take care of these, however," answered Marshall; "for they are very, very precious. And now, love, good-b'ye: to-morrow, or next day at the latest, we shall probably meet again. In the mean while, get rid of your scruples as fast as possible; do your duty to Lady Beddington, as I am sure you will; and let us both look forward to the day when, the difficulties that surround us being surmounted, we may be

able to become all to one another, and to spend the evening of our lives together."

Charlotte's eyes filled with tears as she returned the embrace with which he took leave of her; but no drop stained her cheek. On the contrary, she felt cheered and enlivened more than she had yet done since the commencement of her misfortunes; and having watched his figure till the hall-door closed upon it, she ran up stairs, replaced the casket in the drawer from which she had taken it, and betook herself to her customary employments.

"You don't speak French, child, do you?" asked Lady Beddington, as Charlotte was arranging her hair preparatory to the reception of a dinner-party.

"A little, my lady," was the reply: "I was chiefly educated in a French convent, where I acquired some knowledge of the language."

"Well, now, I thought so," replied her lady; "I was sure you did not learn to dress hair in England. I declare, you are a perfect mistress of the art: you shall supply the place of Mons. De la Ville to-morrow, and prepare me entirely for the drawing-room."

Charlotte was gratified of course, though too modest not to shrink from so serious a responsibility. But her lady was firm; and when

the morrow came, the skill of the handmaid was called into play. It delighted the good-natured countess, who scarcely withdrew her eyes from the large mirror before which she sat, to desire that a young person who requested an audience might wait till her toilet was complete.

"I really do not know how I shall be able to thank Lady Olivia," said she, "for sending me so invaluable an attendant as you, Lucy. I declare that I was never so well dressed in my life. Now, what ornaments would you recommend me to wear? There are the pearls, the diamonds——"

"If I might venture to advise," replied Charlotte, finding the countess stop short, "I would suggest that your ladyship had better wear the diamonds; they are so very beautiful, and will suit the style of this robe so exactly."

"Upon my honour, your taste is equal to your skill, Lucy. Go, fetch the diamonds, then, and we will try how they look."

Charlotte ran to her drawer, brought forth the casket, and applied the key to the lock.

"The wreath will come in so well!" said she, raising the lid; but how it was to come in, her lady was not informed;—a shrill cry, on the contrary, and the falling of the casket on the

floor, warned her that her attendant had met with some sudden shock.

"Good God! what is the matter, child?" cried the countess, starting up; "you frighten me out of my senses."

"Gone!" shrieked Charlotte; "the diamonds gone; and yet I never permitted the key—"

"What!" repeated the countess, "the diamonds gone! The thing is impossible—quite out of the question. Be calm, my dear; don't alarm yourself unnecessarily. Depend upon it, you will find them in the drawer, or in some other place, where possibly they may have been placed by your careless predecessor after they had last been in use. Go and search for them; and in the mean while desire the young woman that waits below to come up. You will find them, depend upon it; and as we are in excellent time, I can as well hear what this person has to say before I am dressed, as after.

Charlotte obeyed, though without the faintest hope that her lady's anticipations would be realized. She knew that they had been in the casket when she brought it down for Marshall's inspection; and a suspicion so hideous forced itself upon her mind, that all other ideas became obliterated. Was it within the range of possibility that Marshall had abstracted them?

Was it credible that she had been the dupe throughout of one so heartless, so utterly depraved, as to consummate the many wrongs that he had done her already by such an act as this? She raised her hand to her forehead,—pressed it violently,—opened her eyes to their utmost stretch,—shook her head,—and then stood rooted to the floor as if she had been a statue. No external object made any longer the faintest impression on her senses. Her lady's bell rang with violence: she did not hear it. There was the noise of feet passing rapidly along the passage outside her room: she was quite unconscious of the circumstance. Nay, the door of her room opened, and the house-keeper entering, walked forward towards the spot on which she was standing without being noticed. At last a violent shake by the shoulder was given, which hardly sufficed to break the spell.

"You are wanted in my lady's dressing-room immediately," was the message; and Charlotte obeyed it without speaking. It seemed, however, as if the atmosphere of Lady Beddington's closet contained some healing powers; for she scarce passed the threshold, ere her senses returned, and she saw that the countess was not alone. There stood near her a young wo-

man, modest, perhaps awkward, in her deportment, whose cheek, as well as that of the lady, was flushed, as if some deeply interesting conversation had passed between them.

—“Come forward, child!” cried the countess, in a firmer tone than she had yet used when addressing her handmaid; “come forward and clear up a mystery which it surpasses my power to penetrate. Here is a young woman who tells me that her name is Lucy Filmer, and brings me a duplicate letter from Lady Olivia Dugdale, containing the same sort of recommendation with that which I got from you. She says that she had another letter, which she lost, she does not know how; that she would have been here three days ago but for that circumstance, and that she has been detained till now waiting for the credentials which are there upon the table. Now it is quite clear that one or other of you must be an impostor; and I desire to know which.”

—“I am the impostor, my lady!” exclaimed Charlotte, casting herself on her knees before the countess,—“I am the impostor; do with me what you will. Oh, I have been cruelly, cruelly duped,—cruelly, cruelly abused; yet am I a guilty creature for all that, and deserve neither mercy nor pity. The diamonds, too, are gone!”

Send me to prison,—send me to trial,—send me to death!”

As she uttered these words, the unfortunate creature fell upon her face to the ground. But the countess, though a kind-hearted woman, was likewise a woman of the world. She could not believe that all this feeling was genuine; she concluded, as in her circumstances any other person would have done, that it was assumed for the purpose of working on her humanity, and so screening the culprit from punishment. She therefore desired the housekeeper to send immediately for a policeman, and to put the impostor, in the mean while, under charge of one of the footmen, so that she might not effect her escape.

“You are an admirable actress, young woman,” said she to Charlotte; “but I am not so young as to be imposed upon. I have a public duty to perform, and depend upon it I will perform it; so, be so obliging as to rise and place yourself in that corner of the room till the servant comes.”

Charlotte obeyed by a sort of instinct, and withdrew to the far corner of the room without uttering a syllable. There she stood,—her eyes fixed and glassy, her cheek deadly pale, and her hair, which the fall had cast loose from its

fastenings, streaming over her shoulders,—the very image of what she was—a creature totally undone. That reason itself did not fail, is indeed the only matter to be wondered at; for hope was entirely extinct, and reason rarely survives its extinction. Nor was her behaviour different when the footman entered and took her into custody. She followed him, as a sheep follows the shepherd, to the hall: he gave her over to the policeman, who took her in charge, unresisting, uncomplaining. Before the magistrate, also, her manner underwent no change; for she never opened her lips either to deny or to admit the crime with which she stood charged.—It is needless to dwell longer upon such details: a clear case of imposture and robbery was made out against her; and Charlotte, who had risen that morning from her bed in a palace, passed the night a prisoner in one of the cells of Newgate.

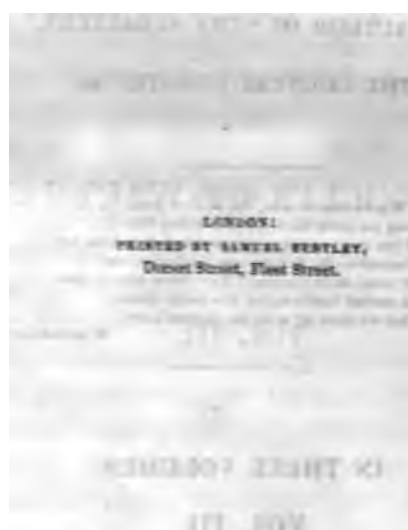
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THE
CHRONICLES OF WALTHAM.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "THE SUBALTERN,"
"THE COUNTRY CURATE," &c.

Man is dear to man, the poorest poor
Long for some moments in a weary life:
When they can know and feel that they have won
Themselves the fathers, and the dealers out
Of some small blessings; have been kind to such
As needed kindness, for this single cause,
That we have all of us one human heart.

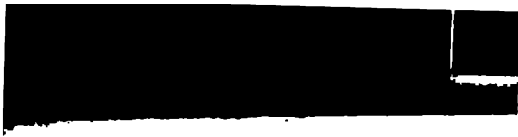
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1835.





THE
OVERSEER'S DAUGHTER.
(CONTINUED.)



THE
OVERSEER'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER IX.

NEWGATE.

CHARLOTTE'S commitment was made out, and she herself conveyed to Newgate, within a single week of the recurrence of the sessions. Her period of suspense, therefore, if such it might be called, was limited. Yet, whether of long or short duration, it would have been equally spent by her as few among the denizens of that gloomy pile are wont to pass their time. For three whole days she held no converse with any one. She refused all sustenance; she would not go forth to breathe the atmosphere of the press-yard, but day and night lay immured in her cell. The governor, with a degree of humanity which is often found in situations

little favourable to its growth, repeatedly visited her himself, and still more frequently sent his wife to see her. But neither the one nor the other could prevail upon her to taste a morsel of food, or to take other measures for preserving her health.

"Let me die! let me die in peace!" was the only answer they received to their kind entreaties: "I do not wish to live—there is nothing for which I should live. Oh, let me die, and die alone, and I will thank you with my last breath!"

"But you must think of your defence, poor child," replied the governor; "you must not sacrifice reputation as well as life. Even if you be guilty, a skilful advocate may get you off; and there is that about you which assures me that you are not intentionally guilty. Have you the means of hiring counsel?"

"Oh, leave me, leave me! I have no defence to make, I want no counsel; I am the most guilty, the most forlorn, the most miserable creature that crawls the earth."

"Perhaps so, poor girl!" replied the governor, deeply affected: "you may have done many things amiss, and your present situation too surely proves it; but that you are guilty of stealing these diamonds, I no more believe than that I stole them myself."

A momentary gleam darted from Charlotte's eyes as she exclaimed, "Would that I were as innocent of all other crimes as I am of that!"

"And yet you will allow your life to fall a sacrifice rather than shake off this oppression, which under any circumstances would be wrong, but which in your case is sinful. Remember, that there is another world than this; and that we have no more right to throw away the lives which God has given for some wise purpose, by our indolence, than we have to take them with our own hands."

Charlotte looked at him bitterly, while she shook her head.

"At least permit me to send the chaplain," said the governor: "he is a feeling and a considerate person, and will pray with you, and for you, if he can do nothing else."

"Have you ever learned to pray, Charlotte?" exclaimed she, raising herself on her elbow,—"ay, these were his very words,—'Have you ever learned to pray?' and when I said, 'No, papa—you never taught me,' he answered; 'Then go and learn.' What if I had learned? was it not then too late?"

"Unhappy creature!" exclaimed the governor, his moral sense almost as much shocked by this last exhibition as his feelings had been wrung by those which preceded it. "If I am

to collect from these incoherent exclamations that you are the child of one who never taught you to pray, then are all your crimes and all your misfortunes sufficiently accounted for. And yet this is no reason why you should be left to perish: I will go and send the chaplain."

He went, without having any opposition made to his design by the wretched being in whose favour it had been formed; and chancing to meet the chaplain almost immediately, the latter repaired at once to Charlotte's cell. He found her still sitting up, as if the excitement which roused her when the subject of prayer was introduced had not yet passed away. He gazed in her pale yet beautiful face, and all the softer emotions of his soul being suddenly called into play, the man accustomed to attend daily on the most obdurate of his race was affected to weeping. Charlotte fixed her large eyes upon him, and saw the tears rolling over his cheeks.

"You weep, sir," said she; "you weep for me. Alas! I cannot weep for myself,—neither can I pray."

"Then I will pray for thee, thou bruised reed," answered the chaplain; and kneeling down by the side of her bed, he offered an earnest appeal to the throne of mercy. At first

Charlotte seemed scarcely aware of what was going on. By degrees, however, her attention was riveted; and when the good man besought Him who tempereth the winds to the shorn lamb, and allayeth the storm of passion in the human heart, to remove from her a portion of the load with which she was afflicted, her lips moved, and she uttered the word "Amen." And then was the fountain of her tears broken up, and the large drops coursed one another over her cheeks, till the loose wrapper in which her slender form was enveloped became wetted through.

"O that I had learned to do this in my childhood!" cried she, clasping her hands together. "O that I had been taught to feel that there is one friend who never forsakes us, unless we first of all forsake ourselves! How different might have been my fate!"

"Unhappy creature!" replied the chaplain: "is it now for the first time that you have listened to the language of prayer? Is it now that you have begun to look for consolation in your sorrows to the only source which never fails us?"

"It is even so, sir," replied she, burying her face in her hands. "A child of shame, brought up in irreligion,—the victim of a misplaced passion—the dupe of an—— Oh, why

should I heap reproaches upon him? No, sir, no,—I never learned to pray; I never had before me the example except of scoffing and profaneness; and now, when my heart is breaking, where can I look for support?"

"To that heaven which you have been taught to deride, poor child," replied the chaplain earnestly; "to that Saviour whom you have never learned to know,—to Him who hath promised that 'those which come to him he will in nowise cast out,' and who never has despised, and never will despise a broken and a contrite heart."

Charlotte had sometimes attended Divine service at Waltham church; she was not, therefore, entirely ignorant either of the language of Scripture, or of the forms of that devotion which she was now invited to practise; and the spark being judiciously fanned by the excellent person who sat by her bedside, a flame was roused of which the warmth and the brightness surprised herself. She did pray, and pray earnestly—not for deliverance out of immediate trouble—not for defence from impending danger, but for pardon of the numerous errors of which she had been guilty, and for strength to bear with patience the evils which they had brought on. Nor did the exercise fail to shed a calm over her outward man-

ner and her inward feelings, such as gave both to her attendant and herself the greatest satisfaction. The chaplain was, indeed, too wise to over-act his part. He had been an instrument in accomplishing much when he brought her to look up without despair ; he did not esteem it prudent to risk the loss of such 'vantage-ground by pushing the thing farther ; but, promising to see her again at an early hour next morning, he took his leave.

“ That girl will not be in a condition to take her place at the bar on Monday,” said he to the governor ; “ indeed, I do not think she will ever stand before a human tribunal at all. The principle of life is undermined ; and unless I greatly deceive myself, her decay will be rapid. I think you had better get the trial put off.”

The governor gladly acted upon the hint. The physician being called in, pronounced at once, that to summon Charlotte into court would occasion immediate death ; and the proper steps being taken, her trial was postponed till the sessions after. It is not often that a detention in gaol can be esteemed by the party detained a visitation of mercy ; yet in Charlotte's case the hand of a kind Providence had never been so conspicuous. From day to day the chaplain attended her ; and the ice

having been fairly broken at the outset, her conversion from error to truth was the consequence. Sorrow, indeed, did the office for which it is almost always sent. She saw that the imaginary principles of honour and virtue had been with her as they are with all men—fences of reed against the inroads of passion. In spite of an extreme delicacy of sentiment, for which, as well as for her abhorrence of falsehood, she was indebted to nature, she had first become the victim of a villain's lust, and then his tool in the perpetration of the basest crimes. Why should this have been? Because honour and virtue, unless they be founded on a proper sense of religion, will never lift either man or woman above the tide of strong temptation, furnishing, as they do, no place of refuge to the frail one who has once erred, nor offering any solid sources of comfort amid the consequences of error. Charlotte felt all this to be the case, now that light had broken in upon her darkness; and she became more composed in proportion as the conviction grew stronger, that now for the first time had she learned to put upon existence its real value.

In pronouncing, as he did, that the principle of life was undermined in his patient, the chaplain had committed no error. Each new morn-

ing found her more weak in body, though far stronger in mind; till at last, while the vital energies seemed rapidly wearing out, the spirit became composed, and even cheerful. It was then that the chaplain conceived himself authorised to question her more fully than he had yet done as to the events of her past life, especially as to the causes which led to her present situation both of disgrace and danger. Charlotte would have gladly been silent on that head. She had no wish to injure any one—and least of all the man whom, in spite of all the wrongs he had done her, she yet had not learned to hate, even while she blamed him. But when her kind friend assured her that to speak the truth was a duty which she owed both to society and to herself, she told him all without reserve. One circumstance alone she besought him to abstain from inquiring into: she wished to conceal both her own name and the name of her betrayer; because, to publish the one would load it with needless disgrace, and a knowledge of the other would doubtless bring the individual into trouble.

“That may be, my dear,” replied the chaplain; “but if he deserve to be brought into trouble, and if by his punishment the wrongs done to injured parties can be redressed, how is it possible to conceal his name without sacri-

ficing the innocent to the guilty? You say that you have every reason to suspect him of having abstracted the countess's jewels while he was conversing with you?"

"I have said so," replied Charlotte; "and I cannot, without speaking falsely, say otherwise."

"Is it then your wish that a lady, to whom you owe every reparation for the fraud upon her good-nature to which you were a party, should not only have her feelings outraged and her confidence abused, but be plundered of her property?"

"Surely not, surely not!" answered Charlotte: "yet if I accuse Marshall——"

"His name is Marshall, then, is it?" demanded the chaplain.

"Oh, I have betrayed him, then, after all!" exclaimed she. "Wretched creature that I am! does the power of controlling my very words fail me?"

"Dear child," replied the chaplain, "what you did was done unwittingly; and were it even wrong itself, no blame could attach to you. But it is not wrong. This Marshall must be the most heartless as well as the most abandoned ruffian that ever bore a human shape. You owe it to society that he should not be permitted to go longer at large: you

owe it to yourself, and to the lady whom he has robbed, that he should be put upon his trial. I pray you, therefore, not to leave the matter incomplete, but to inform me where he is to be found."

"I do not know, indeed I do not; I never knew where he lived. We met at first by chance; and ever afterwards since then, I came to him at times and places of his appointing. I could not tell, were I ever so willing, where to look for him."

The chaplain saw by the earnestness with which this statement was made, that it contained no equivocation. He therefore abstained from pressing the subject further; though by putting various questions he drew from her such a description of Marshall's person as might serve to guide a skilful officer in tracing him. Of course, he did not inform Charlotte why the description was sought; and he hindered her from brooding over it, by going on to ask whether she had any friends in London or elsewhere whom she would wish to see. The poor girl was silent for some time, and her eyes filled with tears, as she answered that there were friends in town whom she would indeed be glad to send for, if she thought they would come and see her in such a place. She then named the Johnsons; and the chaplain, after promising

to communicate with them, and encouraging her to hope the best, took his leave.

Fatigued as she was with the long, and to her the exciting, conversation of which the substance has been given above, Charlotte did not fail to derive from it very considerable consolation. Her bosom was at length unburthened of its load. She had made a candid confession of her own errors; and, though Marshall might have been somewhat endangered by it, there was that within which told her, that to screen him from the fate which his crimes merited was an act of something more than selfish weakness. Not that she experienced the slightest desire to avenge on his head her own personal wrongs; on the contrary, she felt that she was both able and willing to forgive all;—but the chaplain's reasoning, especially as regarded the Countess of Beddington, had carried conviction to her mind. If he were the thief—and could she doubt it?—he must take the consequences, rather than that the injured party should fail to obtain redress. If he were not, as she laid nothing to his charge beyond a mere suspicion, at her hands he suffered no wrong. Moreover, the prospect of seeing the good Johnsons cheered and enlivened her: neither was it a delusive one; for no sooner were they informed of the sad plight

of their *protégée*, than whatever feeling of indignation her abrupt abandonment might have excited died away, and she—for that day his business carried him into the country—made haste to visit her. It is not necessary to add, that the meeting was a deeply affecting one.

“O that you had consulted me more, and made me more your confidant!” said Mrs. Johnson, after she had folded Charlotte in her arms and wept upon her neck. “This at least might have been avoided; for you have been the dupe throughout of one of the most accomplished villains that ever preyed upon his fellow-creatures. Thank God, however, the scoundrel is in the hands of justice; so that from one charge at least—that of committing an offence so atrocious as the robbery of one who trusted and behaved kindly to you, you will be able to clear yourself.”

“Taken!” cried Charlotte: “is Marshall taken? When, how?—Pray, pray tell me! And his punishment, what will it be?”

“It is a long story,—too long for you to hear, were I in a condition to tell it; but I am not: and as to his punishment, never trouble your head about that. He must first of all be tried; and then, depend upon it that his sentence will be a thousand-fold more le-

nient than his crimes deserve. However, I did not come to talk to you about any thing of that sort; my business rather was to ascertain whether there were no friends at a distance whom you would wish to see; your mother—your sister—your child—”

“My child! my baby!” cried Charlotte wildly, as if a new light had suddenly burst upon her. “How has every feeling been overborne in me by one fatal, fatal passion! Bring me my child! Yes, yes, let me see his sweet face once more, kiss his sweet lips, and ask that God to whom I have learned in prison to pray, to be his guardian!—My child—let me embrace my child!”

“I guessed as much,” replied Mrs. Johnson; “and Johnson promised to go on this day to Waltham, so that the baby and your mother also might be with you to-morrow.”

“I cannot thank you as I ought,” exclaimed Charlotte. “And yet, tell me how came you to discover either my name or my birth-place: I do not think that I ever stated either to you.”

“No, my love,” answered Mrs. Johnson, “you did not; but you cannot suppose we would have treated you as we did, had we been without all information on these heads. Johnson brought you home as a stranger doubt-

less; but he made it his business to trace you to your parish after he returned, and to collect as much of your history as strengthened the feelings which your desolate condition had awakened. We knew all that you had suffered previously at the hands of that scoundrel: had we been aware that the acquaintance was renewed in London, we should have done our best to put a stop to it."

The interview did not last much longer, nor was any other subject discussed of which it is necessary to give an account. Mrs. Johnson saw indeed with a mixture of satisfaction and grief, that while the temper of her young friend's mind was in every respect improved and strengthened, her frame was getting less and less able to bear up against the pressure of thought; she would not therefore permit it to be entirely broken down by a continued discussion of topics so likely to disturb it, but once more embracing Charlotte, and blessing her as if she had been her own daughter, the kind-hearted woman returned to her home.

CHAPTER X.

A RELEASE.

THAT night, for the first time since she had become an inmate of a prison, Charlotte slept. Her slumbers were light, and her dreams vivid; yet, as the latter were not painful, they left no scar upon her memory, and the former refreshed her. When the medical man visited her next morning, therefore, he found her so composed, that, but for the peculiar expression which the eye always assumes when its light is waning, be it ever so slowly, he would have pronounced her materially better. She herself, however, entertained no such opinion.

"Do not deceive yourself, doctor, nor alarm me by speaking of the possible prolongation of my days. Life has been to me, if counted by its moments, short; but to reckon by moments is not always a fair method of computing, and mine has been too fruitful of misery not to have exceeded their just number. I shall not recover; and I thank God for it."

"You are very ill, unquestionably," replied her attendant; "but it is not for us to determine events that are in God's hands; and to-day you are unquestionably better than you were yesterday."

"So shall I be more fit to encounter what awaits me," replied she. "How goes the time, doctor? At what hour may I expect to see my friends?"

The doctor, who had been informed of the arrangements made by the Johnsons, and indeed consulted as to the propriety of acting upon them, was at no loss to understand the meaning of this appeal, and met it fairly. He informed her that she need not expect her friends from the country till the evening. "But in the mean while," continued he, "are you capable of undergoing another scene, which will, I fear, harass you much more? There is a wretched criminal within these walls that has asked to see you. He came in only two days ago; but is so changed, even in that space of time, that it would be difficult to recognise him. His trial will come on to-morrow, and he entreats you to see him ere it begins."

Charlotte's heart beat quick while she demanded his name.

"He desired me to give it to you as Marshall; though that I suspect is not his real name,

nor the only false one under which he has passed."

"I will see him," answered Charlotte, overcoming by a strong effort her agitation. "Let the good chaplain visit me first, and I will see him afterwards."

The chaplain was not slow in attending to the message of which his brother functionary was the bearer. He took his seat beside the sick-bed within ten minutes after the medical gentleman quitted it, and grasped between both his the thin, white, attenuated hand which Charlotte held out to welcome him.

"You must support and direct me, dear sir," said she, "through a terrible trial on which I am about to enter. How shall I receive Marshall? What shall I say to him? Surely I may forgive him; and if there linger in this heart some sparks of more than pity for him still, say whether I am bound to extinguish them. I will not disgrace your kindness, on that you may rely; for I have sought strength from heaven, and my prayer has been answered. Yet I would fain have your advice; and if it cost me more than all that I have yet suffered, I will at least strive to follow it."

"I do not distrust you in the least," replied the chaplain. "I neither distrust your

resolution, nor blame the present temper of your mind. Only let no entreaties on his part draw you into a promise that you will hold back aught that may be necessary for the furtherance of the ends of justice. To forgive even him is your duty; and you will do it. But beyond that let no remnant of a feeling, misplaced from the outset, not unholy in its nature, lead you. Remember that with the world your business is well-nigh done: the part which it now remains for you to act must raise your affections and your wishes to heaven."

"Then if he implore me to conceal what I know of that robbery, I must reject his prayer?"

"You must, Charlotte; and what is more, you need not hesitate to do so; for all that you could tell is known already, and the proofs even of that crime are too decisive to permit the smallest chance of his escaping detection."

"Now pray for me, dear sir, that I may be strengthened to perform well whatever part I may be called upon to perform."

The chaplain complied with her request; and in the petitions which he offered up, she joined earnestly yet calmly. When he had ended, she desired in a firm tone that Marshall might be admitted; but as she did not

express any wish that the worthy divine should withdraw, he considered it unnecessary to expose her, unsupported, to the wiles and sophistries of one whose influence over her was clearly not yet rooted out. If, however, the chaplain lingered where he did under the idea that it would be the object of her betrayer's visit to work upon her tenderness in his own behalf, the event proved that he was mistaken. Marshall came heavily ironed, and advanced towards the bed on which his victim lay; yet so completely had despair and remorse altered the very lineaments of his face, that she found some difficulty in recognising him.

"I come, Charlotte," said he in a deep sepulchral tone, "to beseech you, ere my doom is fixed, to forgive, if it be possible to do so, the many wrongs I have inflicted on you."

"Marshall," replied she, "I forgive them all, truly, freely, unreservedly; even as I trust that my own sins will be forgiven when I stand before the great judgment-seat."

She held out her hand towards him; but the wretched man refused to take it. "No, Charlotte, no," cried he, "that would be too much! I must not again pollute even that hand by holding it in mine. But if the gratitude of one whose hours are numbered have any value in your eyes, take all that I have to give—un-

less it be this proof of my remorse and self-condemnation."

"This is more than I require, much more than I ever expected," said she, while her voice faltered a little and her lip quivered: "but the forgiveness which you ask, and I tender, will be incomplete if I fail to add one word of advice. As you hope for peace of mind here, as you hope for pardon hereafter, let the future be devoted entirely to reformation. You may yet live many years, if not in this country, still among your fellow-men elsewhere. Oh, Marshall! let them be years of penitence and humiliation,—such years as mine would have been had it been God's will to prolong them."

Marshall groaned aloud. "You do not know all my guilt," answered he, "even against yourself, nor the end to which it must bring me. I shall be a spectacle for gaping crowds to gaze at before three days pass over our heads."

"What is it that you mean?" cried she eagerly. "Your crime is a heinous one, but does not, they tell me, incur a capital punishment."

"Not that crime to which you are privy," replied he, "but another. No, no, Charlotte, nothing can save me."

"Do not say so! do not say so!" exclaimed

the poor girl, now excited into a forgetfulness of all her previous resolutions : " they cannot carry me into court to bear witness against you, and they shall not wring from me any statements here !"

" Oh, what a heart has my villany broken ! exclaimed Marshall, dashing his hands together ; a movement which, causing his chains to rattle, went like a death-knell through her brain. " Devoted as you are, not even your forbearance could save me. I tell you that I shall suffer, but not for that. You cannot save me ; and if you knew all, even you would not."

" I would,—I can,—I will !" shrieked she. " You are not fit to die : you have not yet made your peace with heaven ; you must not die !"

Here the chaplain, who had hitherto kept back full of admiration at the scene of which he was a witness, hastily interfered. He saw that the prolongation of such an interview, while it could accomplish no benefit to the one party, would inevitably operate upon the other very mischievously. To permit its continuance, indeed, would be to expose, in his judgment, religious principles of only a day's growth, to a contest with feelings cherished for years, and now recalled by the force of circumstances to their original strength. He therefore entreated

Marshall to withdraw ; commending him, however, for the tone which his conversation had assumed, and giving Charlotte full credit for the gentleness of her nature and the purity of her intentions. But Charlotte was too highly excited to pay heed to such reasoning. " We are never to meet again !" she cried : " he is going to his death. Oh, do not part us now ! He is to me everything, everything. Nay, let me rise ; I will go into court and declare that he had no hand in the robbery. By me, by me only was it perpetrated ; and I call you to witness, sir, that I have said so in the presence of ——"

" Charlotte, for Heaven's sake stop !" said Marshall. " This is no time to appeal to God or man in support of what you know to be false. I did commit the robbery ; barbarously, basely stole the jewels, and left you to incur the blame and bear the punishment. But I repeat, that, were this doubtful, there is another charge against me from which I cannot escape ; so that your evidence, if taken, would avail nothing."

" You must die !" cried Charlotte : " then what have I to do with life ?" She fell back as she uttered these words, entirely exhausted ; and while she lay apparently unconscious of what was going forward, Marshall withdrew.

When she recovered, however, it was only to demand in a frantic tone what they had done with him: for neither the entreaties, nor the reasoning, nor the appeals of the chaplain to their past conversations, seemed to have the slightest effect upon her. It was at this juncture that footsteps sounded in the long passage outside, and that the feeble cry of an infant smote upon the ear. As if a magician's wand had touched her, Charlotte's whole demeanour underwent an instantaneous change. She sat up; she listened; a smile came over her countenance, like a sunbeam over a dark cloud; and when the door of the cell opened, and Mrs. Johnson entered bearing a child in her arms, all other feelings became absorbed in those of the mother.

"My babe! my boy!" cried the unfortunate girl. "Oh, give me my child!" and when they placed it in her arms, she first gazed in its face, and then covered it with kisses. "My sweet babe! my little solitary snowdrop! my poor orphan! bless thee, bless thee! The world will look cold on thee when I am gone; but thou art mine now, and mine thou wilt be when we meet again in heaven."

A flood of tears came to her relief, and never from that moment did the bitterness of anguish return. Even Marshall ceased, as it appeared,

to occupy a place in her thoughts: that is to say, she never spoke of him, she never alluded to him; but dividing her attention, as it were, between her infant and the practice of devotion, her mind resumed the calmness and tranquillity from which for a brief space it had been withdrawn. It is true that she seemed to experience considerable regret when it was announced that her mother had refused to visit her. "I owe her, perhaps, little of kindness," said she, "and no example by which I could profit: but she is still my mother, and it would have been pleasant to receive her forgiveness—some tokens of reconciliation, ere I went hence. But God's will be done! You tell me she sent kind messages: I must accept them and be thankful."

If he had sustained a shock from the display of so much feeling on Charlotte's part during her last interview with Marshall, the good chaplain was restored to his former condition by contemplating the happy change that the arrival of her child had produced. He had not yet spoken to her about receiving the sacrament. He opened the subject to her on the following day, and found, after a brief explanation, so much readiness, and more than readiness, to communicate, that considering the very precarious tenure by which her cord of life

held together, he conceived that he should not be justified in delaying the ceremony. Most readily her friends the Johnsons agreed to partake of the elements with her; and pleasant, albeit deeply affecting, was the conversation which she and they and the chaplain held on the evening previous to their administration. Indeed, so gratifying were the answers that Charlotte made to the several interrogatories which the good man put to her, that he ventured at last to refer to her connexion with Marshall, and to the manner in which she had last spoken to him. The experiment, somewhat hazardous, led to results more and more satisfactory.

"Marshall and I have taken leave of one another for ever," said she. "I repeat before you all, what I said to himself, that by me he is forgiven. But I do not think, were God to restore my health, and his life to be prolonged, that I would ever see him again. Alas! I fear that I have already erred in talking so incoherently as I did when he stood beside me. But that sin also will, I trust, be pardoned, for I repeat of it in dust and ashes."

There needed but this last display of right feeling to testify to the strength of her faith and the depth of her penitence. With herself she was now at peace; yet, as she gazed upon

her babe, the tear would from time to time gather in her eye, and fall down upon the forehead of the infant as it smiled in her face. The movement was not lost upon her friends.

"You are anxious about your boy, Charlotte," said Mrs. Johnson kindly.

"I trust that at least is not sinful," replied she; "for who will care for him when his mother's head is in the dust?"

"I will," answered Mrs. Johnson, with difficulty controlling her emotion. "He shall be to me as my own. We have no son, and when he grows up he will help Johnson, and more than repay us for the care we may bestow upon him."

Charlotte could not answer. She was able only to press the hand of her benefactress, and to place the child in her arms.

And now the hour came round at which the Holy Sacrament was to be administered. The elements were already on the table, and the chaplain was preparing to commence the service, when Charlotte, whose strength gave way rapidly, moved her lips, and with difficulty said,

"Is Marshall's trial over?"

She was answered in the affirmative.

"Has he been found guilty?"

"He has."

"And his fate?"

There was no answer, nor did she again demand one, but added only the word "When?" The reply was "To-morrow." She closed her eyes for an instant, seemed to breathe a secret prayer, and was herself again. The ceremony now went forward, and Charlotte did her part in it with the liveliest devotion. The other parties were also much affected; more especially when, at its close, Charlotte, pointing to the infant, which lay sleeping by her side, again made an effort to speak.

"Take him to his home, dear Mrs. Johnson—I will not think even of him again. Take him, and tell him, when he is old enough to understand, that his poor mother died penitent, and blessed him with her latest breath."

There was no bearing up against a scene like this with any degree of fortitude. All who witnessed it wept aloud; and the child was removed, as its mother desired, that evening to Coleman-street.

The night wore on, to Charlotte a sleepless but not a miserable one; for her thoughts were in a better world, and her friend Mrs. Johnson sat by her side. No conversation passed between them, nor indeed did Charlotte move, except to have her parched lips occasionally moistened, till the morning came in,

and the prison-clock struck eight. Not with the completion of the hour, however, did the bell cease to toll. It continued a slow and solemn knell, which seemed to rouse the fading energies of Charlotte's mind, and to give a momentary power of articulation to her tongue.

"Why does the bell toll?" asked she of the governor's wife, who had entered.

"It is the passing-bell, my dear," was the answer: "a prisoner is going to execution."

"Marshall!" cried the poor girl; "wait one moment for me."

These were the last words she uttered. The spirit passed with them from its tenement of clay, and when they looked again at the speaker they saw but her corse. She was buried at the expense of her kind friends, and now sleeps in St. Bride's churchyard.

1. The first part of the text is a list of names and titles.

THE MAN OF MANY NAMES.

1875-1876

THE MAN OF MANY NAMES.

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY PORTRAITS.

BEFORE we revert to the state of affairs at Waltham, it will be necessary to give some account of the individual who played so important a part in the tragedy which has just been recited, and to whose disgraceful end allusion has been made.

In a remote corner of the beautiful county of Devon, at no great distance from the river Exe, stands one of those picturesque and unassuming mansions, which, more perhaps than any other class of buildings that are to be found within the compass of the four seas, give their peculiar character of civilization and refinement to almost every English landscape. The mansion in question is a vicarage-house; and the traveller who may chance to visit that part of the county of which it is the ornament will

not fail, if he keep his eyes open, to recognise it. Thrown back from the bank of the stream so far that by him who stands upon the lawn the brawling of the water will scarce be heard, the vicarage lifts its modest head just beneath the slope of the hill; a small portion of which being included in the glebe and tastefully planted, forms a background to the little scene, which can be rightly estimated only after it has been seen. In front, and sloping down towards the water, are the lawn, the shrubbery, and the kitchen-garden, all of them fenced in by well-trimmed hedges, and each separated from the other by screens of laurestinas.

In that fair cottage, of which the white walls, the sloping roof, the arched windows, and the trellised veranda are all in perfect keeping with the objects that surround them, Cyril Trevenean, *alias* William Marshall, *alias* Bill Jones, first saw the light. He was the son of the Rev. Montague Trevenean, one of those overpaid and bloated pluralists whose wealth and indolence bring disgrace on their profession, as well as on the religion of which they are the teachers: for Mr. Trevenean was not only vicar of Heavitree, but rector of St. Mary besides; the united proceeds of which brought him in, after the payment of necessary expenses, a clear annual revenue of four hundred and

fifty pounds. To entitle him to this enormous remuneration, moreover, he had absolutely nothing to do. On Sundays, to be sure, he read prayers, and preached twice,—sometimes thrice: on other days he ministered to the necessities, temporal as well as spiritual, of more than two thousand persons, almost all of whom were mere paupers, and scattered over a surface of nearly thirty-five square miles. He attended all vestry meetings likewise; gave to them the benefit of his wisdom and experience, without which they would have often gone wrong; dispensed more of hospitality than nine-tenths of the laymen who possessed three times his means, and throughout the whole circle of his neighbourhood was the pattern, which was everywhere more or less felt, of gentle manners, pure principles, and a highly cultivated understanding. But then Mr. Trevenean, like the rest of his order, could not be numbered among the productive classes: he added nothing to the stock of national wealth; he only sought to elevate and improve, as far as his influence extended, the national character. Now it is well known, that except by the dissemination of newspapers and the agency of mechanics' institutes, there are very few methods of acting upon the national character which the political economist can sanction; and hence he whose views extend no

further than to make his neighbours fear God, honour the king, and be contented with their lot, well deserves to be denounced as a useless member of society. Doubtless it was upon this principle that Mr. Trevenean, like his brethren in general, suffered much reproach in places and among circles where his person was unknown. For it is a curious fact, that it is exactly among such as are total strangers to their habits and style of living, that the English clergy find the most unsparing denouncers of their vices, their indolence, and their unpopularity.

Had Mr. Trevenean possessed no other pecuniary resources than those which his benefices supplied, it would have been impossible for him either to do the good to which all around him bore witness, or to maintain his station in society. Mr. Trevenean was, however, a living instance of the practical benefits of a system which, on theoretical grounds, is generally condemned. The younger brother of a wealthy house, he brought into a profession which gave him the possible chance of civil rank and large emoluments more than, in point of fact, the profession was ever likely to afford to him; and, in doing so, rendered the good things of this life subservient to the noblest purposes; because they enabled him to exercise an influence over the minds of his neighbours such as,

without them, no man, in the present state of society, may ever hope to attain. Still, having married early in life, and being the father of a large family, he did not find that the interest of a younger brother's fortune was more than adequate to make up what was wanting in the emoluments of office. When, therefore, his brother, Sir Charles Trevenean, Bart. of Morley Park, in Cornwall, proposed to relieve him of the charge of one of his sons, and to educate him with his cousin, the vicar conceived that it was his duty to close with the offer. He accordingly agreed to render up Cyril, the eldest of his household flock, to the guidance of his uncle, partly because the uncle had taken an especial fancy to the boy while yet an infant, partly because his age corresponded most nearly with the lad of whom he was destined to be the companion.

Cyril Trevenean had attained to his tenth year when he became an inmate of Morley Park. He was a remarkably handsome youth, with fine large dark eyes, dark brown hair, an open, and, as it seemed, ingenuous countenance, and a form which bore about it every conceivable indication of strength and agility, mixed up with surpassing grace. His manners were likewise attractive in no ordinary degree, especially among persons who love to be flattered and courted ;

and his abilities were soon pronounced by the domestic tutor, to whose care the cousins were entrusted, to be of a very superior order. His relative, on the other hand, though only by three months his junior, was in every other respect far behind him. In the first place, being a delicate boy, his growth was considerably stunted; and there was a pallor on his cheek, and a languid expression in his blue eye, which seemed to indicate the constant pressure of suffering. Yet was Reginald Trevenen a sweet child. Gentle he was, and confiding,—a creature who appeared as if he must always lean upon another for support,—whose affections were all of the most overflowing kind, and who never could perceive a blemish in the character of one whom he had once elected to be his friend. Great, therefore, was his delight when his father announced to him that he was about to have a companion of his own age in every respect worthy of his confidence; and full and unrestricted was the share of affection which he bestowed upon Cyril from the first moment they became associated together in the school-room.

In the lives of schoolboys, events very seldom occur out of which even an augury of their future career may be fairly collected. There is nothing, therefore, so ungenerous to-

wards a lad of twelve or thirteen, as to come to any decision on his character; for circumstances tend so much to mould, if they do not give existence itself to dispositions and propensities, that to prognosticate the man's destiny from a consideration of the youth's proceedings is at once unkind and unjust. It required, however, no great depth of penetration in the present instance to discover that, if ever a trial of skill should arise on any subject between the two young Treveneans, the match would not be a fair one. Cyril, it was quite evident, had acquired a complete ascendancy over his cousin before they were six months together. There was not a thought in Reginald's heart which he did not lay bare to his relative; there was not a wish of which he was conscious, that he did not disclose to him. Nay, so perfect was the mastery of the one mind over the other, that Cyril became ere long the medium of communication between Reginald and his father. If the boy had a point to carry, or a request to make, he soon ceased to make it directly, as he used to do, preferring rather that Cyril should be the spokesman, and of course the party whose wishes were gratified. And it is a fact, not perhaps entirely without parallel, that with this tacit sort of arrangement between the cousins Sir Charles appeared

quite satisfied. The truth is, that Sir Charles not only saw and lamented his son's inferiority both as to talents and personal accomplishments, but was much chagrined at it. If he took Reginald out to ride, for example, or to shoot, or to hunt, (and being himself a keen sportsman, he was anxious that his son should acquire the same tastes,) the boy's feeble frame always gave way, and he was obliged, however reluctantly, to leave his father in the field and return home; whereas Cyril stuck to him throughout, and not unfrequently ran him so close, both in bagging game and riding for the brush, that Sir Charles used to experience a positive triumph in keeping still ahead of his nephew. Now Sir Charles, though far from being a bad-hearted man, was weak, and of course selfish. The affection which he entertained even for his son was grounded much more upon the consideration that the child was something belonging to himself, than upon any other principle; and hence it wounded his self-love to find that in matters where he especially desired Reginald to excel, he should have come so far behind his cousin.

"I wish poor Reginald had Cyril's spirit and intelligence!" said he to Lady Trevenean one evening after the lads had been out with him to sport, and returned with their usual fortunes.

"That Cyril is one of the finest boys I ever saw ; but Reginald, poor fellow ! he is fit for nothing, and never will be."

"You forget, my love," replied the lady, "that the one is a robust, the other a delicate boy. Have a little patience ; let Reginald's constitution gain strength, and he will be fit to discharge all the duties of his station as becomes him : and if he do that, what more need we desire ?"

"Oh, I should like to see him what his cousin is,—a manly, bold, smart, quick fellow ; a sort of chap that one might hope to see take a lead some day in the affairs of the county ! What a pity it is that our only son should be such an imbecile, while Montague's troop are all strong in body and vigorous in mind !"

"I wish, with you, it had been differently ordered," replied Lady Trevenan : "yet I am not sure whether I would not rather have Reginald as he is, with all his delicacy of frame and slowness of apprehension, than that he had his cousin's strength and abilities, accompanied by his temper and disposition."

"Why, what can you see about Cyril's temper and disposition to offend you ?"

"Oh, I don't know : Cyril appears to be quite alive to his own interests, and quite awake to the foibles and weaknesses of those

about him. I hope we may never have cause to repent that he became Reginald's companion."

"Now, my dear, you must excuse me if I say that it is entirely the mother that speaks here. You are annoyed, as well as myself, because your son is not as far before his cousin as he happens to be behind him : but there is this difference between us,—that, while I lament my own boy's inferiority, I am willing to allow it ; whereas you would fain discern in Cyril some bad qualities which shall place him on a level at least with his companion."

"Indeed, Sir Charles, you mistake. I entertain no such desire ; I speak only what my mind suggests, after a good deal of watching and anxiety."

"Why, what have you discovered about the child that you disapprove of?"

"It is not perhaps quite easy to answer that question to your satisfaction ; but if you insist on having a reply, I tell you, that I don't like the means he adopts to ingratiate himself into your good graces. Why should he be the chief speaker on all occasions ? Why should not your own son command at least as free access to his father as a stranger ? And don't you perceive how he has trained Reginald also to look

up to him? Depend upon it, that boy has about him a great deal of art."

Sir Charles laughed, while he repeated his assertion, that all these whims and fancies were but the offspring of maternal jealousy. "Why should Cyril be the chief speaker?" continued he: "why, but because among boys, as well as among men, character and talent always find their level. Rather ask why it is that Reginald should have yielded to Cyril the place which Nature had allotted to himself. The fact is, that the one is a boy of energy and decision; the other, a weak, puny creature,—gentle, I grant you, and kind-hearted, but no more fit to bustle his way through life than he is to ride on horseback across the sea. No, no, my dear; so far from regretting that Reginald has been thrown thus early into the society of his cousin, we shall, if the children live, have every reason to rejoice; for whatever good may come to our son will have been infused into him by the force of his companion's example, you may depend upon it."

The reasoning of her husband made as little impression on Lady Trevenan's mind as her hints and insinuations appeared to have done on his. They separated therefore, as most disputants do, more and more confirmed in

their previous prejudices, and more and more disposed to exhibit by their manner to the parties concerned the sentiments which each of them harboured. Thus, the lady became cold and distant to Cyril; the gentleman more affectionate than ever. Nor was Cyril slow in detecting that the estimation in which he was held in different parts of the house was far from being the same. Towards Lady Trevenan he therefore acquired a violent distaste; towards her husband his advances became every day more pressing. Still Cyril was, even at thirteen years of age, too profound a politician to make any display of feelings which were calculated to annoy. In Lady Trevenan's company he was generally silent; but it appeared to be the silence of one who is grieved,—not of a youth labouring under irritation, and anxious to give it vent. On the contrary, his attentions, whenever an opportunity presented of offering them, were obsequious; and he uttered no complaints when they were rejected. At the same time he did not fail so far to exhibit his chagrin, that the commiseration of his patron was very often roused in his favour.

—“I see you think that your aunt does not love you, Cyril,” said Sir Charles to him one day, after the lady had spoken sharply in reply to some tender of personal service; “and I am

afraid the thought makes you unhappy. Dismiss it from your mind without scruple. Your aunt loves you sincerely ; not so much, perhaps, as she does Reginald,—for that, you know, would be unnatural : but she is as fond of you as a woman can be of any child that is not her own ; and I, you must perceive, make no difference between you and your cousin. So, cheer up, my boy, and don't let trifles cast you down."

"You are indeed more than a father to me, sir," replied Cyril, while a few tears escaped from between his long eyelashes ; "and I am sure that I love you as if you were my father. And Lady Trevenean, too,—I would fain convince her, that if she does entertain any suspicions of me, they are groundless ; but she will not allow it."

"Suspensions, boy ! what could she suspect ? No, no, Cyril ; don't give way to fancies. Some people have one kind of manner, some another ; and if there be a little coldness in your aunt's outward bearing, rest assured there is nothing of the sort in her heart. Nobody can see you without loving you.—But where is Reginald ?"

"I left him copying the exercise I wrote— I mean, writing his exercise for to-morrow. He will be ready in five minutes ; and then may we go shooting with you ?"

"To be sure you may, my boy. But what was that you said about copying an exercise?"

"Oh, never mind that, sir," replied Cyril with a smile, and making towards the library door: "it was a mistake on my part, that is all; and you ought not to notice it."

"Well, well, go thy ways; thou art a noble fellow, at all events. I wish to God Reginald had been like that boy!" continued he, when the door closed on his nephew and he was left alone. "It is the strangest thing in the world, and the hardest, that a child on whom the honour of a family depends should be both weak in mind and fragile in body! How it galls me to behold so many proofs of his unfitness for his station! Zounds! I could almost wish——But never mind; the thing can't be helped: he is a monstrous lucky fellow in having so useful a friend in Cyril. That boy entwines himself round my heart astonishingly."

As he uttered this, the youths entered together; Cyril arrayed in his shooting garb, and carrying his gun; Reginald in his ordinary dress, and looking more than usually delicate.

"What! Reginald, don't you go with us?" demanded Sir Charles.

"Not to-day, papa," answered his son timidly. "I promised mamma to accompany her in the carriage as far as Truro; and I feel, besides, that I should not be fit to stand the walk."

"Do as you please," answered Sir Charles coldly: "by all means tie yourself to your mother's apron-string. Come, Cyril, let us be off."

They departed, leaving Reginald a good deal cast down, though not till Cyril had somewhat ostentatiously requested leave to stay and amuse his cousin. This, however, was refused; indeed Reginald himself, while he thanked him with full eyes for the proposal, would not listen to it for a moment: so Cyril and his uncle were soon tramping towards the cover, with spaniels and keepers attending.

"I am afraid Reginald's health is very bad," said Sir Charles: "I wish, Cyril, he had been your brother, and not your cousin."

"Ah, but then, sir, he would have been my younger brother, you know; and that would not have been fair."

"Why not? If there be two brothers in a family, one must be older than the other; and why should it not be you? But that is all nonsense. His brother you cannot be in blood, though I trust you will always be brothers in

affection; so that I may treat you in life and death as if you were both my own. Now, tell me, Cyril, is Reginald really as delicate as he pretends to be,—or is he indolent?"

"No, sir, I should not call him indolent, certainly. I think he has no great fondness for exercise either of mind or body; but indolent is a very strong term. I am sure, likewise, that he is delicate; though, perhaps, if he were to give way to it less, he might gain more ahead of his sickness."

"That is precisely my view of the case," replied Sir Charles; "and yet the medical men describe him as a very sickly youth, and recommend great care in treating him. Well, well, we can't alter our natures. I think he is a well-intentioned boy; weak, perhaps, but free from vice: don't you think so?"

"He has no vice. The worst that can be said of him is, that he wants courage always to do right, even when he wishes to avoid doing wrong. But time and the care of our excellent tutor will overcome all that."

"Yes, my boy, and the force of your advice and example. I cannot sufficiently thank Providence for sending you here; my son would have been otherwise lost."

They were by this time at the skirt of the

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cover ; and the sport was, as usual, excellent. As usual, likewise, Sir Charles exceeded his nephew's number of birds by three ; and they returned home to a late dinner more and more pleased with one another.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE'S FIRST LESSON.

Time passed; and ere the lads had accomplished their eighteenth year, Cyril was as completely master of his uncle's ear and affections as if he had been the son, and Reginald the nephew. The latter, indeed, appeared so thoroughly conscious of this fact, that in all situations, both at home and abroad, he played a secondary part; while all who came in contact with them, including Mr. Monro the tutor, gave to the aspiring stranger the deference, if such it may be termed, which the heir of Morley Park might have naturally claimed. Throughout the whole mansion indeed, from the saloon to the servants' hall, as well as among the keepers, markers, grooms, and other hangers-on, there were but two individuals that seemed resolute not to bow the knee to Bael. These were Lady Trevenean, and Mrs. Daller, who had nursed Reginald in his infancy, and who, continuing ever after to be treated as a

member of the family, transferred to it her undivided devotion. Many and earnest were the conferences which she held with her lady, and frequent the arguments which she used in order to bring about Cyril's expulsion. But Lady Trevenan knew that on that head she was destitute of power; and she therefore restrained the zeal of her kind-hearted dependant, at the same time that she struggled to suppress her own indignation.

Up to the period of which mention has just been made, the youths had been treated by others, and seemed to regard themselves, as mere boys. Their amusements, their occupations, their virtues and their vices, were all those of schoolboys; and as schoolboys they went and came, without any particular caution being displayed to watch their morals or direct their tastes. It was somewhat remarkable, too, that not once during a period of four years had Cyril solicited permission, or availed himself of the opportunities that were put in his way of visiting his native place. When his uncle spoke to him on the subject, his answer was uniformly the same: "I consider this as my home, dear sir, and you as my father. If you wish me to leave you, I will obey; but if my own inclinations are to be consulted, I cannot feel so happy anywhere as in your society;

and therefore I would rather remain where I am."

By Lady Trevenean, and Mrs. Daller the nurse, such conduct was spoken of as affording proof that the lad was utterly heartless. Sir Charles regarded it as evidence of an extraordinary devotion to himself, and became more and more devoted to his nephew in consequence.

The lads had now arrived at that time of life when the thought how it would be advisable to deal with them began to obtrude itself with increased frequency into Sir Charles's mind. His own plan was to have sent them to one of the English universities; but Lady Trevenean represented her son's constitution as so unequal to the wear and tear of a college life, that the father yielded to her remonstrances, and consented at least to defer the period of their matriculation. It was manifest, however, that to keep them much longer at home would do no good either to their morals or their manners. Strange to say, moreover, it was on Reginald, the sickly boy, that the life of comparative idleness which they were permitted to lead threatened to produce the worst consequences. Perplexing rumours of his depravity, particularly as regarded the females about the establishment, reached his father's ears; and at last a case was brought home to him, which

determined Sir Charles, let it cost what it might, at all events to remove him from a place where the facilities of doing wrong appeared to be both ample and alluring. The case was this :—

Lady Trevenean had brought up about her own person the orphan daughter of an old and faithful domestic, who, as she grew towards woman's estate, became, from her excessive beauty and artless demeanour, the admiration of all that beheld her. And Emma Freeman was indeed a lovely creature. Her fair flaxen hair, her soft, sweet, dark blue eyes, her delicate complexion, her light and fragile frame, gave her altogether the appearance of a creature not designed for this world ; while her disposition was as affectionate, as flexible, as docile, as generous, and as modest, as the exquisite symmetry of her outward form might have led the spectator to expect. Being especially favoured by her mistress, Emma was permitted, as a child, to associate a great deal with the boys. No care was taken to interrupt the intimacy when the season of childhood had given place to that of youth ; and the dejected air and fading roses on poor Emma's cheeks indicated, by-and-by, that it had not been continued for nothing. To come to the point at once ;—though no one was able to say that the slightest act of indiscretion had ever

taken place in his or her presence, there were not wanting numbers to assert, that with one or other of the young gentlemen Emma had been too intimate; and that time would doubtless give proof—probably of the strongest kind—to what extent the intimacy had gone.

The parties most interested in the faults both of the young and the old are said to be invariably the last to be told of them. This was especially the case on the present occasion; for though Lady Trevenean observed that her *protégée* looked ill and was out of spirits and unusually silent, as she had no right to suspect her of indiscretion, far less of vice, her compassion was the only feeling which the spectacle excited. She repeatedly questioned the poor girl as to the cause of her dejection; and, though answered only with floods of tears, she continued to attribute both the malady and its effects to a constitution manifestly of the most delicate kind. Mrs. Daller, the nurse, seemed however to be either sharper of vision or much more prone to suspect. “She did not fancy the young woman’s appearance at all: Emma was no longer a child; she was old enough to know good from evil, and to choose either as she had a mind: and, for her part, she could not help thinking that it was not quite the thing to leave a young woman of seventeen running

wild with a couple of youths such as Master Reginald and his cousin."

"Why, Martha," replied her lady, "what am I to gather from all this? Surely you cannot mean to insinuate that Emma is not a good girl? far less that either Reginald or Cyril have abused the opportunities which my want of consideration may have thrown in their way?"

"I insinuate nothing, my lady: I only say plainly, that I should not be surprised if poor Emma, as your ladyship calls her, were a great deal more artful than you give her credit for; and that one or other of these boys has been drawn by her into a bit of a scrape."

"Now that is not like you, Martha," answered Lady Trevenean; "you are generally as charitable as the heart of man could desire, and I never knew you unjust before even in your suspicions. Depend upon it, if what you hint at be true, poor Emma will be found to have been at least as much sinned against as sinning. However, it is time the case were inquired into."

Lady Trevenean, desiring Mrs. Daller to withdraw, sent by her a message to Emma, importing that her presence was required. The girl came trembling and ready to faint; indeed, so great was her agitation, that her lady was obliged to hand her to a seat, otherwise she

must have fallen. Having allowed her some time to control her feelings, Lady Trevenean then began a conversation of which it is unnecessary to enter into the details. It ended thus:—

“And so, young woman, I have been nurturing all this while an adder in my bosom; and you are, by your own confession, the guilty thing which others have long pronounced you, but which till now I never could believe! And now there is but one point more on which I must desire you to inform me. To which of these two young men, if to either, do you mean to lay the burthen of your worthlessness?”

“Oh, do not ask me, my lady!” was Emma’s reply, while the salt drops chased one another over her cheeks. “I shall not live, I am sure, to bring a public accusation against either; and if I did, I owe too much to this family not to bear alone the consequences of my own guilt, without bringing disgrace upon my benefactors. I will never tell the world who is the father of my child, should I survive—which I am sure I will not—to bring it into the world.”

“This is fine talking, Emma,” said Lady Trevenean; “very romantic and very magnanimous! I wish only your romance and magnanimity had begun earlier, so as to keep you from ruining yourself, and occasioning so much

uneasiness to those to whom you owed a different return. But there is such a thing as a parish to be satisfied on that head ; or you must reveal your secret before a bench of magistrates, if you persist in refusing to reveal it elsewhere."

"I shall not live, my lady, to reveal it to any one," replied the poor girl ; "of that I am quite sure ; and if I did, nothing but force would ever compel me to swear truly, and force itself cannot wring from me a falsehood."

"Well, young woman, I suppose you don't expect that I can permit you, after such a confession, to continue an inmate of this house ? You are an orphan, I am aware, and well-nigh friendless ; but you have an aunt in the village ; you shall remove therefore this very afternoon, and I will send and prepare her for your reception."

So saying, Lady Trevenean waved the culprit out of the drawing-room, and proceeded immediately to seek her husband.

"You look as if you had some grave intelligence to communicate," said the baronet : "something has occurred to vex and agitate you."

"You judge rightly, Sir Charles ; and I am much mistaken if it fail to agitate you also when I repeat it. Emma Freeman has just told me ——"

to you therefore is, to allow her as much as will keep her and the child independently, and let the rumour go abroad that I am the culprit. Such a tale cannot injure me, for I am nobody; whereas your son's character must be preserved from the breath of suspicion, on your account, and on account of Lady Trevenean."

"My dear Cyril, I cannot sufficiently express to you how much you make me your debtor. Were it not for that awkward promise of marriage, the other scrape might be got over well enough; though certainly he is very young even for an affair of that kind. But it would blast him for ever were he to begin life under the shade of such a charge as she would doubtless bring against him. I believe, therefore, that I must take advantage of your kindness. Still, that the scandal may blow well over, I do think it will be prudent for you to quit home for a season; and as you have yet a great deal to learn, I propose sending you for a couple of winters to Glasgow, where the sciences are at least as well taught as in our English universities. I suppose you won't take long to get ready?"

"I can prepare in an hour," replied Cyril: "but neither Mr. Monro nor Reginald are quite so rapid in their motions, and therefore it may be well to consult them."

Sir Charles agreed to this proposition, and the uncle and nephew returned home. The dinner was not a pleasant one to any of the party ; for my lady was fidgety and wretched, Sir Charles reserved, Reginald awkward and ill at ease, and Mr. Monro himself deficient in his accustomed plausibility. Cyril alone appeared to be in tolerable spirits, though even he dropped occasionally into a fit of abstraction.

"What can be the meaning of my father's increased coldness?" said Reginald, as he and his cousin withdrew to their study after tea : "and my mother seems strangely altered since morning."

"Upon my honour, Reginald, I cannot tell ; but I fancy they are brooding over our projected trip to the North ; from which both you and I will, I am sure, derive not only advantage, but enjoyment. How soon can you be prepared for a start ?"

"By to-morrow morning if necessary, or to-night."

"I don't think we shall be required to set out in the dark," replied the other with a smile : "however, excuse me for half an hour ; I must go and consult your father."

Cyril withdrew as he spoke ; but, instead of returning to the saloon, passed quietly out to the park by a back-window. He hurried across

the open glade, and, diving into a little thicket, found a young woman waiting there to meet him.

"It is all over, Cyril; my shame is known everywhere. I am an exile from the house where my childhood was spent; and no one now looks on me except with disfavour. What shall I do? what will become of me?"

"Do as you have hitherto done, my sweet Emma; keep your own secret and mine, till the convenient moment comes when it will be safe to reveal it. I knew of your removal; I knew also that the thing was inevitable, for all my plans are frustrated: my uncle insists upon our quitting home for a year, and I cannot prevail upon him to alter his determination."

"Are you going also, Cyril? Am I then to be quite deserted? Oh, I cannot survive!"

"No, dear Emma, not deserted. I have made arrangements by which you will be provided with everything of which you may stand in need. An annuity is settled on you, more than sufficient for your maintenance either here or elsewhere; and the amount will be paid, wherever you may be, to your own appointed agent. Would to Heaven I could do more! But you know my total dependence on my uncle; and were I to do you that justice now,

which, sooner or later, you may depend on receiving, he would cast me off at once; and then where should we both be? Therefore be content, even as I am, to endure this temporary separation, with the firm assurance that it is but temporary, and that when we meet again nothing shall part us."

So far a conversation, which ended, as in such circumstances conversations usually do, in the consent of the weaker party to adopt whatever line has been suggested by the stronger. Emma returned to her aunt's, degraded, sorrowful, and desponding; while Cyril hastened back to begin those preparations which by noon on the following day were complete. The result of the whole may be stated in a few words:—On the day following that in which the above conferences were held, the young men with their tutor bid farewell to Morley Park, and in due time found themselves jogging along on the road to the North. They were all joyous as birds let loose from a cage, full of high hopes and bright anticipations. But they left one behind for whom a different destiny was reserved; the victim in some degree of her own imprudence—in a degree far more effectual of another's villainy. Emma Freeman shut herself up in her aunt's cottage, and there pined her life away.

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Her constitution, naturally delicate, gave way under the pressure of shame and outraged feeling; and, long before the winter gave place to spring, she was carried, not yet a mother, to her grave.

CHAPTER III.

SCHEMES AND DEVICES.

THERE befel nothing to the travellers during their progress northward, nor yet a great deal throughout their sojourn in Glasgow, and their attendance on the learned professors there, of which it is necessary to give any account. The young men appeared, indeed, to relish their emancipation from the restrictions of home at least as much as youths in general are apt to do; and Mr. Monro was at once too prudent and too liberal to throw a damp upon their feelings. He shared, on the contrary, in all their amusements, if he did not positively promote them; dividing his attention pretty equally between them, but bestowing all his confidence on Cyril alone. For it may be stated once for all, that, owing to some cause or another, there had early sprung up between him and the young intruder an intimacy which every year seemed only to increase and confirm: yet it cannot perhaps be said that the one exercised any positive in-

fluence over the other. Both, on the contrary, seemed to act as if in obedience to the dictates of their own humours; that is to say, their bearing was that of persons who play into one another's hands, rather than of an artist and his weapon. Still nothing arose out of this, during their six months' residence in the "western capital of Scotland," so much at variance with the habits of young men in general as to demand particular notice. The case was different when summer came, and, instead of returning into Cornwall, it was announced to them from Morley, that they were not expected there for at least two years to come.

"What can my father mean by such an arrangement as this?" demanded Reginald, after he had read and re-read the letter which contained the baronet's decision. "For my part, I do not object to it: there is a great deal in this country well calculated to interest, and I anticipate both instruction and amusement from our exile. But, for the life of me, I cannot understand why the sentence should have gone forth."

"Nor can I throw any positive light on your darkness," replied Cyril, "except that your father is, as you know, an eccentric man, and probably wishes to see the improvements which you are going to make, brought, as it were,

per saltum to perfection. You left him a sickly and a shy lad; he desires to receive you back again a robust and well-bred man."

"And a man of science and learning," interposed the tutor, "richly imbued with all the lore which intense study and solitary reflection can alone bestow. Sir Charles judges, as he always does, wisely."

"And where or how is it proposed that we are to spend our vacations?" continued Reginald: "not, I trust, in this large workshop, of which I confess myself heartily sick already."

Reginald was not singular in his disinclination to pass the dog-days amid the smoke and filth of Glasgow. His cousin professed himself equally anxious to breathe a purer atmosphere; and Mr. Monro, as in duty bound, fell in pleasantly enough with the humours of his pupils. At his suggestion a cottage was hired by the margin of Loch Modeart, in Perthshire; and the little party adopting, as far as they were able, the habits of the natives, acquired day by day fresh vigour both of body and mind by constant exposure to the weather.

The change which his residence at Loch Modeart soon produced upon the health and bodily appearance of Reginald was such as to surprise, if it failed to delight, both his tutor and his cousin. Imperceptibly a conviction

had formed itself in the mind of the latter that Reginald's days were numbered; and as, in the event of his decease, he would himself become heir to the honours and property of the Treveneans, he had learned to anticipate the occurrence of such an event certainly not with dismay. From sundry hints, which in the course of their more confidential communications had escaped him, it appeared that a similar persuasion was entertained by Mr. Monro. Perhaps it was owing to that circumstance that he preferred conciliating the good opinion of his patron's nephew to that of his patron's son: for Mr. Monro was a man of far-seeking forethought, who needed but a glimpse of his own interests, and he never failed to pursue them steadily, no matter how remote. Be this, however, as it may, Cyril was not slow in observing that, in exact proportion to the improvements exhibited in Reginald's constitution, the attentions of his tutor became from day to day less exclusively devoted to himself. Now, though Cyril was, if the truth must be spoken, perfectly indifferent touching the friendship of Mr. Monro, he did not relish the kind of anticipations to which its palpable transference to his cousin gave rise; and, after long and painfully brooding over the matter, he determined to hold some serious conversation on the subject.

“Did you ever see such a change on a human being as on Reginald?” said he to Mr. Monro, as they sauntered together one evening by the lake’s side: “he seems to have taken out a new lease of life; and the powers of his mind gain equal strength with those of his body.”

“Reginald will live to inherit the honours of his family after all, I suspect,” replied the pedagogue, casting a glance of peculiar expression towards his companion. “I must say that I did not expect so much at one time; but the Highland air has done wonders for him.”

“Yet his constitution is naturally delicate in the extreme; and his prejudices, a sure sign of mental weakness, are insurmountable. I don’t think he has any particular fancy for you, for example?”

“Probably not,” replied Mr. Monro: “he has not had too much cause. If I had done as much for him as I have for you, it might have been otherwise.”

“Nay, my dear friend,” said Cyril; “never repent that you have honoured me with your especial regard. I hope that I have learned from you what it is to be grateful.”

“Very likely: but the means, my dear boy—the means of showing one’s gratitude are not always commensurate with the disposition; and

if Reginald live and prosper, as he now bids fair to do, in your case such means will not be very ample."

"But I really don't think, to speak seriously, that Reginald is so much strengthened after all," observed Cyril with an air of great indifference; "and if he were, he is no favourite, you know, with his father: the old boy won't leave him more than he can help."

"Oh, you think so, do you? Doubtless your sources of information are excellent. And yet there is one great reason why he should not be cut off, at least, even in his cousin's favour."

"What may that be, friend Monro?"

"That the estate is strictly entailed, friend Cyril. The ready cash, whatever may be its amount, will perhaps be disposed of as caprice or a sense of justice shall dictate; but the broad acres, including the right of presentation to the livings, and of appointment to the more lucrative and agreeable office of land-steward, goes, I apprehend, with them."

"So much the worse for you, Monro. Had I been heir-at-law, you should have had your choice either of the livings or the stewardship; or you might have obtained both, supposing the duties of the one to be compatible with those of the other."

"In that case, I wish you had been heir-at-law," replied the tutor with a smile: "but our wishing won't bring it about, I am afraid."

"It is monstrous hard," said Cyril, speaking in some sort to himself. "Had one's prospects not been so good in the beginning, one might have endured it; but when the whole stood, as it were, within one's grasp—only a single life, and that a bad one, being between—upon my soul it is enough to drive any man mad! I wish to God we had never visited Scotland!"

"Through whose fault was that, Cyril? If you had exercised a moderate control over your passions, poor Emma might have been spared, and we should have been at Morley still, caudling the young hopeful till he sank under it. And then to throw the scandal so cleverly upon his shoulders,—upon his who, I will venture to swear, never dreamed of such a thing,—I must say you deserve credit for that, as well as for the dexterity with which you have contrived to keep him up to this moment in ignorance of the renown that attaches to him."

"Well, if he never thought of such a thing at Morley," replied Cyril, while his eye suddenly lighted up as with some new idea, "may I fail in all my efforts to serve both you and myself, if he don't think of such a thing

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"What may that be, friend Monro?"

"That the estate is strictly entailed, friend Cyril. The ready cash, whatever may be its amount, will perhaps be disposed of as caprice or a sense of justice shall dictate; but the broad acres, including the right of presentation to the livings, and of appointment to the more lucrative and agreeable office of land-steward, goes, I apprehend, with them."

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here ! Only conceive, our gentle and guileless cousin hath been smitten by the charms of pretty Bell Livingston, the old minister's grand-daughter. It would have done your heart good to see how well he played his new part both yesterday and the day before. Upon my soul though, I am half inclined to wish that he had kept clear of that vessel, with which I was myself strongly inclined to grapple."

"Why, you foolish fellow, if you again permit the humour of the moment to stand between you and the remotest prospect of your permanent interests, I give you up for ever. With the minister's grand-daughter you ought not, under any circumstances, to form such a *liaison* as you would alone think of forming; and should any consideration whatever tempt you to thwart the inclinations of your loving cousin, why then you are a greater fool than I take you to be. Let the thing go on. It cannot injure; it may prove of incalculable service to you, whatever may be its termination."

"Expound ! expound ! most learned pun-dit," replied Cyril, "for as yet thou speakest in riddles ; and I do not possess the genius of *Œdipus* to read thy dark sayings !"

"Listen then, and consider, and understand; and, as a prelude to all further discussion, let us at the outset cast aside whatever of disguise

may have hitherto cloaked our intentions. I take it your first wish is to become owner of Morley, with the honours and emoluments thereto pertaining?"

"Most ably and most candidly announced," replied Cyril: "to thy first charge I plead guilty."

"And as there is but one bar in the way, your next wish is to remove it?"

"True again, O man of deep thought! but how?"

"Ay, there's the rub. A year ago, nature seemed willing to fall in with your inclinations, by nipping the delicate blossom ere it came to fruit; but now, if things be left to their legitimate course, the fruit will not only ripen, but sow itself again. I assume that you don't harbour any designs against your cousin's life?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Cyril, starting, not in mockery, but in sincerity. "I certainly should be delighted to hear myself addressed as Sir Cyril Trevenean; but not for that homage, were it within my grasp to-morrow, would I defile my hands with poor Reginald's blood."

"What say you then, as the next best expedient, of promoting Reginald's marriage with Bell Livingston?"

"That he may become the father of a dozen sturdy Highlanders, each of whom

crosses my path of course, exactly as his sire did before him."

"No such thing, Cyril. You leap to conclusions most illogically; therefore give heed. You know that the baronet's affection for his heir-at-law is not of the most doting kind, and possibly you can account in some sort for the matter. You know also that the heir-at-law entertains for his papa much more of respect than of love,—if indeed that deserves to be called respect which amounts in point of fact to fear. Of course, the head of the house of Trevenean would never consent to the union of his only son with the grand-daughter of an obscure Scotch parson. But the happiness of the young couple themselves, we will assume, depends upon their union. The lover's relative is naturally much interested about him: he tries at first to reason him out of a foolish passion, but yields at last to the agony of his mind. What can be done? There is a private marriage; immediately after the celebration of which there comes a peremptory order of recall from Morley. The bride is induced to hold her tongue: the tutor is left in Scotland, with an adequate salary, to watch her, while the cousins return home. By-and-by Sir Charles wishes to see his son settled, and a match with some wealthy English lady is proposed. The

agitation caused by the pressing of that point deeply affects the health of the young husband, and he pines and dies ; or else his weakness is worked upon, and he perpetrates bigamy. Do you take ?”

“ Perfectly, most excellent Mentor ; and go with and approve every suggestion which thou hast uttered. By what strange caprice of fortune is it, that talents like thine, so well calculated for the meridian of courts and cabinets, should be wasted on the lowly and irksome occupation of a bear-leader ? What would not an excellent monarch give, had he at his disposal, either for foreign or domestic intrigue, such a counsellor as thou art ? However, seeing that higher game is not yielded to thy talons, the minister’s grand-daughter and the heir of Morley must find them employment, while thy pupil in all things follows out the hints which thou hast given. The idea is brilliant in the extreme !”

“ Now a truce with heroics, Cyril,” replied the tutor, stopping and looking him full in the face. “ The device which I have proposed is one that cannot be carried into effect without patience, perseverance, the exercise of much discretion, unbounded confidence on your part towards the person whom you may condescend to trust, and the assurance that to embark in so ha-

zardous an enterprise shall be rendered worth his while. I know you to be a youth of more than ordinary quickness, and I give you credit for at least as much of wisdom as belongs to most men of maturer years. But have you resolution to go through with such an affair, to whatever risks it may expose you? for I need not add, that to withdraw from it after the first step shall have been taken, will be ruin."

"I did flatter myself," replied Cyril firmly, "that after living with me so many years on terms of the closest intimacy, you might have discovered that my perseverance and discretion are at least equal to my quickness. I tell you, that ever since the hateful truth was forced upon my conviction, that Reginald was likely to outgrow his boyish weakness, the necessity of doing something has been continually present with me—ay, even in my dreams. I have thought of every imaginable scheme, short only of that for which I am not yet sufficiently depraved. Nay, I do not conceal from you that even that measure itself has from time to time passed across my fancy, though I have invariably driven it away again with horror. You may believe, therefore, that being put in possession, as I now am, of the outlines of a scheme that bears upon its surface every mark of feasibility, I am not likely to shrink, let come what

may, from filling up its details and acting upon them. Give me your cordial assistance; and if success attend our efforts, you shall need but to specify your own reward. To be sure, we may fail; and if so, you can easily be kept out of view, and shall be so kept, as far at least as I am concerned. But we shall play for a high game; and if we win it, why then our triumph will be in proportion to the amount of difficulties overcome. Therefore, do not doubt either my courage or my caution. I will go with you into the matter with heart and soul, and I pledge myself that the same proceedings which make my fortune shall make yours also."

"I take you at your word, Cyril," replied the tutor: "that is to say, I *will* take your written agreement to secure to me an annuity of five hundred a year; which, when you come into possession of Morley Park, you shall redeem at ten thousand pounds. Are you content?"

"I have only one objection," said Cyril, grasping the extended hand of his confederate; "which is, that you are too moderate in your demands. When I come into possession of Morley Park, I shall be bound to consider myself your debtor to a much larger amount than ten thousand pounds."

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Cyril, and smiling, as they walked homewards; "but as I do not wish to burthen a friend's estate too much, I shall be quite satisfied with the promissory note for ten thousand."

The friends reached their lodging just as the clock was striking ten, and were soon afterwards joined by Reginald. A slight supper, accompanied with a good deal of *badinage*, closed in the occupations of the day; and they retired, each to ponder over again upon his own pillow the thoughts which had chiefly occupied his mind during the day.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INTRODUCTION.

IN the hints which Cyril has been described as throwing out relative to the state of his cousin's affections, no very material error had been committed. Reginald was indeed deeply enamoured of a simple Highland girl, of whom he knew no more than he had been enabled to gather from an accidental introduction into her grandfather's family, when free and unrestricted intercourse which the manners of the country sanction among acquaintances of even a few days' standing gave him an opportunity to collect but little. The circumstances of the case were these.

Ever since their arrival among the mountains of Perthshire, Reginald Trevenean seemed to have changed his nature. He became, instead of the delicate stayer at home, the most adventurous and toil-enduring member of the party ; one who went abroad before sunrise with his fishing-rod or his gun, and not unfrequently

returned only after the moon was in mid-heaven. Among other pursuits to which he especially addicted himself was deer-stalking. The opportunity of tracking that noble animal occurred indeed about Loch Moideart side but rarely: for though there are more forests than one within the compass of forty miles, the care with which the animal is now looked after and preserved cuts off almost all his chances from the unprivileged stalker. Still a buck, either scared away after sustaining an unequal combat with a rival, or wounded perhaps, and so driven to break loose from the wonted haunts of the herd, would occasionally make his appearance on Benlars side; and as surely as this occurred, Reginald, who soon made friends with the most experienced poachers about the place, obtained information. Away he posted on all such occasions rifle in hand, taking his informant for the most part as his guide; and if he did not invariably return loaded with red-deer venison, he never failed to exercise in quest of it both the skill and the patience of an expert hunter. Cautiously he planted himself to leeward of the pass in which the animal had last been seen, and slow and tortuous were his movements if by chance he caught a glimpse of its noble antlers uprising like the branches of a tree from behind some grey rock on the brow of the corry.

Nor when it came to the final experiment was Reginald found wanting, provided any approach to what the sportsman would term a fair chance were afforded. If by dragging himself on his belly from stone to stone he contrived to bring his rifle to the level—in other words, if he brought the beast within a hundred or a hundred and fifty paces—it rarely happened that he missed his mark; so true was his aim in ball-firing—an accomplishment which till now he had never practised, but to which the consciousness that he did excel in it produced, as it is apt to do, a great partiality.

Reginald was returning one day late in the autumn from an excursion of the sort somewhat jaded with toil, when, just as he was about to descend into the glen at the further extremity of which his temporary abode lay, he found himself thrown into a situation requiring almost more of decision than belonged to his naturally gentle and timid disposition. He saw beneath him two persons, a male and a female, the former evidently of an extreme old age, the latter in the first dawning of womanhood, endeavouring, as it seemed vainly, to escape from a ferocious bull that was pawing the ground and advancing upon them. The plateau on which they were moving was a bare open hollow, hemmed in on one hand by the

mountain down the side of which Reginald had just passed; on the other by a rapid river, of which the channel was full of huge stones. From the motions of the pair, it was quite evident that they knew and rightly estimated the amount of their danger. The old man's arm was round the girl's waist, and he threw from time to time an anxious glance back towards the monster from which he desired to shield her; while the girl, manifestly more concerned for him than for herself, seemed to be supporting his steps, and so far hastening his progress. But the race, if such it may be termed, was quite unequal: the bull gained upon them continually, even though he did not quicken his pace beyond a long trot; till, having arrived within a few yards of the spot where in despair they had to face him, he halted, lashed his sides with his tail, and seemed on the eve of attacking them.

Scarcely conscious of what he was about to do, Reginald brought his rifle to the present. A single instant sufficed to make him sure of his aim. He pulled the trigger, and the animal rolled upon the ground with a ball in his brain.

Reginald's first glance was naturally directed towards the victim of his skill; his next turned upon the persons whom he had saved, and on whom so sudden a revulsion from despair to its

opposite had produced its customary effect. The girl had fallen to the ground ; and the old man, sitting down, was supporting her head upon his knees, and striving with palsied hands to undo the strings of her bonnet, so as to admit a free current of air to her face. In an instant Reginald's self-command returned. He ran towards the little group ; said a word or two of encouragement to the old man ; passed rapidly on to the river, and returned with his drinking-cup full of water, and applying it partly to the girl's lips, partly to her hands and forehead, had the satisfaction speedily to observe the colour return into her cheeks. By-and-by she drew a long breath, and, opening her eyes, sat up, eagerly demanding whether her grandfather were safe, and where he was.

"I am here, safe and sound, dear child," replied the old man, " thanks to this gallant young gentleman who has saved us both ; or rather, thanks to that Providence which sent him in our hour of need to stand between us and destruction. I am sure, sir," continued he, turning to Reginald, " you have laid me under an obligation of which no words can express the amount. You have preserved not only my life, but that of my dear child ; and may God bless you for it, for I can offer no recompense !"

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mountain down the side of which Reginald had just passed ; on the other by a rapid river, of which the channel was full of huge stones. From the motions of the pair, it was quite evident that they knew and rightly estimated the amount of their danger. The old man's arm was round the girl's waist, and he threw from time to time an anxious glance back towards the monster from which he desired to shield her ; while the girl, manifestly more concerned for him than for herself, seemed to be supporting his steps, and so far hastening his progress. But the race, if such it may be termed, was quite unequal : the bull gained upon them continually, even though he did not quicken his pace beyond a long trot ; till, having arrived within a few yards of the spot where in despair they had to face him, he halted, lashed his sides with his tail, and seemed on the eve of attacking them.

Scarcely conscious of what he was about to do, Reginald brought his rifle to the present. A single instant sufficed to make him sure of his aim. He pulled the trigger, and the animal rolled upon the ground with a ball in his brain.

Reginald's first glance was naturally directed towards the victim of his skill ; his next turned upon the persons whom he had saved, and on whom so sudden a revulsion from despair to its

opposite had produced its customary effect. The girl had fallen to the ground ; and the old man, sitting down, was supporting her head upon his knees, and striving with palsied hands to undo the strings of her bonnet, so as to admit a free current of air to her face. In an instant Reginald's self-command returned. He ran towards the little group ; said a word or two of encouragement to the old man ; passed rapidly on to the river, and returned with his drinking-cup full of water, and applying it partly to the girl's lips, partly to her hands and forehead, had the satisfaction speedily to observe the colour return into her cheeks. By-and-by she drew a long breath, and, opening her eyes, sat up, eagerly demanding whether her grandfather were safe, and where he was.

"I am here, safe and sound, dear child," replied the old man, " thanks to this gallant young gentleman who has saved us both ; or rather, thanks to that Providence which sent him in our hour of need to stand between us and destruction. I am sure, sir," continued he, turning to Reginald, " you have laid me under an obligation of which no words can express the amount. You have preserved not only my life, but that of my dear child ; and may God bless you for it, for I can offer no recompense !"

"I have done nothing, sir, to deserve either

recompense or thanks," replied Reginald modestly. "It was the act of a moment—the result of mere impulse, such as any one must have obeyed in my circumstances; and very glad am I that it succeeded so well, both for your sake and my own."

"It was much more, young gentleman," answered the old man; "it was a special interference of Providence, and, as such, it behoves us, in whose favour it befel, to return our first thanks to Heaven. But we should ill deserve the continued protection of the Power which shielded us now, were we to fail of gratitude to you, who were at least its instrument. I trust you will do us the favour to accompany us home."

Reginald had fixed his gaze, while the old man was speaking, upon the countenance of his companion, who seemed as yet to have only partially recovered from her terror; and the glance sufficed to assure him that he had never beheld a creature more lovely. Her age could not exceed sixteen or seventeen at the most. A profusion of dark brown hair, let loose from the restraint of the head-dress, streamed in rich masses over her shoulders. Her eyes, large, dark, and full of intelligence, expressed, when those of Reginald met them, much more than it would have been in the power of any com-

bination of words to communicate. Naturally pale, fear had lent a tinge to her cheek which contrasted exquisitely with the clear and alabaster hue of her forehead; and when the lips parted as if in an effort to speak, two rows of teeth were displayed to which the brightest pearl were impure. Nor was her form at variance with the gentle and truly feminine cast of that beautiful countenance. Somewhat below the middle stature, every limb appeared to be moulded in the most perfect symmetry, so as to realize the brightest dream that poet ever encouraged while seeking to describe a wood-nymph, or fay, or gentle spirit of the fountain. Reginald gazed upon the fair creature with an earnestness of which nothing but the peculiarity of their circumstances could have rendered her unobservant, and drank in, even at first sight, whole draughts of a passion which, with minds like his, never brooks control.

Had there been no other motive to guide him, Reginald felt that it would have been uncivil to decline the old man's invitation: as the case stood, he closed with it greedily. Nor was his arm useless as a support either to the patriarch or his grandchild. The weight of eighty winters pressed, as the old man said, heavily upon his shoulders; and the girl still tottered in her gait from excess of agitation. As

they proceeded onwards, however, both the one and the other so far recovered as to make their young protector aware of their condition and circumstances. He, it appeared, was the minister of the parish, of which he had been the incumbent upwards of fifty years: she was all that remained to represent a family which had consisted at one period of six sons and three daughters. "But they all died young," continued Mr. Livingston: "they were all, except one, taken away before the world had time to corrupt them. I thought, when blow after blow fell, that Heaven dealt too hardly with me. First one and then another left me just as youth was beginning to ripen into manhood; and, worst of all, the partner of my joys and sorrows died also. It was then my grief assumed, God forgive me! the language of complaint. But now I see things in their true light: they have but gone before me, leaving only this dear child to close the eyes of her grandfather, after she should have cheered and supported, as she has done, his last days. You will find, therefore, but a thinly peopled manse, with little in or about it to lead you back again, unless it be the gratitude of its inmates."

Reginald could reply only by repeating his assurances that he neither deserved nor desired so much as the thanks of those whom it had been

his good fortune to serve. They therefore continued their course, discovering every moment fresh reason to be pleased with one another: for the minister, though loquacious, was full of knowledge and right feeling; and Reginald won upon him as much by his modesty as his decision. With respect to Isabel, she, as may be imagined, took little share in the conversation: yet when she did speak, there was a music in her voice which sank into the listener's soul; while her eyes beamed upon him with an expression so cordial, so grateful, so confiding, that Reginald felt as if he were already on a footing towards her of the most unrestricted friendship.

Thus it was throughout a half-hour's walk, the completion of which brought them in view of the minister's dwelling,—than which, Reginald acknowledged, not without reason, that he had never beheld anything so beautiful. It stood at the base of a low green hill, easy of ascent, and feathered with trees to the summit; behind which, though cut off from it by a vale of perhaps a quarter of a mile in width, uprose a rugged and ponderous mass of granite. From the front windows of the manse, again, the eye looked out upon the whole length of the lake. There it lay, with its islands, its promontories, and bays, all of them thickly wooded, and all enclosed with an amphi-

theatre of mountains, piled one upon another in the most extraordinary combinations of form imaginable. It chanced, moreover, that just as the scene opened upon them, the sun, which had been drawing gradually towards the west, disappeared beneath the far-off mountains; and as his beams shot upwards, tinging the sky with gold, and shedding over rock, and tree, and water, tints which art has never yet been able to imitate, Reginald, who really had a taste for the sublime in nature, gazed round him in mute astonishment.

"It is a glorious scene!" exclaimed the old man, while his eye lighted up with some of the enthusiasm which had doubtless belonged to him in youth. "You cannot wonder if we, who have lived all our days amid such objects as these, should acquire an attachment to the land of our birth, which you Southerners are apt to deride as misplaced."

"I should very much wonder if the case were otherwise," replied Reginald. "Were this my native country, no consideration on earth would ever induce me to leave it."

"And yet the feeling is fast dying away among us," observed Isabel. "The attachments of which my grandpapa speaks appear to be retained only by those of his own standing; for the young quit their native valleys

without a sigh, and seldom think of revisiting them."

"There are causes for that in most instances, Bel," said the minister, "the reverse of flattering to the Highland gentry. The spirit of improvement has made its way into this remote corner of the empire even as it has done elsewhere, and produces its customary effects. Old tenants, ejected from the sheelings in which their forefathers lived from generation to generation, cannot easily reconcile themselves to a change of residence unless it be complete. We shall have to seek in North America, by-and-by, all that may remain both of our language and our customs."

"And something, also, we owe to your country," added Isabel, addressing herself to Reginald. "You are too wealthy, too liberal. You corrupt our primitive tastes by scattering your gold among us, and, creating new and artificial wants, render us dissatisfied with our condition."

"You would not have us accept the services of men so willing as your hardy peasants without remuneration?" demanded Reginald with a smile.

"That is as the case may be," replied Isabel. "Our peasantry used to be repaid for every act of kindness by the consciousness that they did

right in performing it; but you are fast teaching them to sell their good qualities—to make civility itself an article of barter.”

“Yet you, who blame us for giving the voluntary guide a few shillings, seem determined to treat me, a fortunate stranger, as if I had rendered you essentially my debtor.”

“Ah, the cases are different,” answered Isabel, while a blush tinged her cheek. “He who goes a mile out of his way to direct the steps of a stranger deserves thanks, but no more: he who has preserved life cannot be rewarded according to his merits.”

“Besides,” continued the old man, “we are selfish in all this display of gratitude. We lead a lonely life here, and desire to cultivate the acquaintance of a young gentleman whose acquirements appear to be in keeping with his modesty and courage. So that upon us, not upon you, the obligation is conferred, which we shall not, I trust, be hindered from acknowledging.”

They were by this time arrived at the little swing gate which, intersecting a rustic fence, conducted into the minister's garden; an enclosure which, sloping down from the front of the manse, abutted upon the road, as that again touched the waters of the lake. They passed along the narrow gravel-walk, bordered

on each side by flowers and flowering shrubs, and were admitted within the portals of a substantial stone house by a bare-headed, bare-footed servant girl, whose costume and general appearance contrasted unpleasantly with the air of comfort and neatness that reigned around, though to the eye of Reginald alone such contrast seemed to be visible. But if the slovenly attire of the handmaiden struck him as out of character in such a family, Reginald was scarcely less startled by the manner and appearance of the lady whom he found sitting beside the window of the parlour into which he was ushered, and to whom Mr. Livingston introduced him as to his sister-in-law. Nor, to say the truth, was Miss Mysie Macwhapple a sort of personage whom it would have been easy to overlook.

Miss Mysie Macwhapple was one of that class of ladies of which some remains are yet to be found north of the Tweed, but which promises in half a century or thereabouts to become altogether extinct. Well-born, very indifferently educated, and, above all, left by the early death of her parents totally destitute, Mysie had subsisted from eighteen to thirty-five on the bounty of remote connexions, passing during nine months of the year as a visiter from house to house on in-

vitations which were much more frequently given as a matter of duty than as an indulgence of inclination. Her home all this while was a single apartment in a country town of the Lowlands; to enable her to pay the rent of which, as well as to provide food and fuel while inhabiting it, she embroidered muslin, made gentlemen's shirts and children's dresses, and accepted small annual donations from such as were willing to bestow them. Strange to say, however, amid all this dependence and poverty, Miss Mysie was not only cheerful, but self-satisfied. In the consciousness that she was descended from one of the oldest families in the Highlands, she found ample sources of consolation amid all her difficulties; nay, she positively looked down upon many of those by whose bounty she lived, as upon beings of an inferior order. Hence, when her elder sister, like herself portionless, consented to become the wife of Mr. Livingston, Mysie went about from place to place deploring the occurrence, and blaming the delinquent as one who, from base and mercenary motives, had brought disgrace upon the best blood in all Scotland. "Wha wud hae thought of such a thing, Mrs. Morrison?" such was the epithalamium which she poured forth into the ear of a cousin. "Your marriage was bad enough;

for, tak away his yestate, and what is Mr. Morrison that he should hae sought the hand of a daughter of the house of Ivan Dhu? But young Livingston, forby that he's a Presbyterian body, Lord have a care o' me! he's the son of a shepherd on the lands of Glenstrae. I'm sure I'll never be able to haud up my head again in gude society!"

Time passed, however, and as the bride continued to represent her situation as one for which she had every cause to be thankful, Miss Mysie, after the defection of more than one of her more aristocratic supporters, was at last induced to honour the manse with a visit. There everything was done to render her life agreeable, and even her pride gave way before the melting influence of kindness. The consequence was, that when, in obedience to his wife's dying wishes, Mr. Livingston, now a widower, invited Mysie to take up her abode with him, she yielded, though not without a show of reluctance, to enter upon the charge of his household. Nor, to do her justice, was she ever unmindful of her duties, as far as the powers of her mind enabled her to trace them out. She nursed his delicate children till, one by one, they pined and died. She reconciled the minister to a rash marriage which his eldest son, when yet a youth at college, had contracted;

and took home little Isabel at her father's demise, so that she might be brought up at a distance from her disreputable mother. In one word, Miss Mysie's faults were all those of the understanding, — her excellences those of the heart: so that for fifteen years in which she superintended the domestic arrangements of Moideart manse, she contributed not a little to the well-being of its inmates.

CHAPTER V.

A MANSE.

"THIS, sister, is——" said Mr. Livingston; and he paused, as if at a loss, yet unwilling to violate the law of good breeding, which prevents the Highlander from asking the name of a guest.

"My name is Trevenean,—Reginald Trevenean," interrupted Reginald, perfectly unacquainted with the real cause of the old man's embarrassment, though anxious to remove it. "I am the only son of Sir Charles Trevenean, of Morley Park in Cornwall; and, with my cousin and tutor, have come to Scotland for the purpose of completing my education."

"Well, sister," continued the old man, "this is Mr. Reginald Trevenean, to whose courage and address you owe it that either Bell or I stand here to introduce him."

"I'm very glad to see Mr. Trevenean," replied the lady, raising her meagre person from the seat which she had hitherto occupied, and

courtesying in a manner which was clearly intended to impress the young man with a due conviction of her dignity,—“the son of Sir Charles Tranean—”

“Trevenean, my dear,—Trevenean,” said the minister quickly.

“Weel, weel, Maister Livingston, be it Trevenean or Tranean, it’s a’ ane to me : I’m very glad to see him ; for a right-down English gentleman’s fit company for a Macwhapple ; though your mongrel Lowland bodies, I canna abide them ava. But what was that ye were saying about yoursel’ and Bell there ?”

“That the young gentleman before you saved both our lives not an hour ago.”

“Lord have a care o’ me !” cried Miss Mysie, descending at once from her stilts ; “how did he manage that ?”

Mr. Livingston then related what had occurred, in spite of repeated attempts on Reginald’s part to interrupt him ; and Mysie equally bore down his reluctance to hear his own praise sounded, by the volubility of her exclamations.

“Did ever onybody hear o’ the like o’ that ? to lat wild bulls gang up and doun, rinnin’ at honest folk this gate ! It was a’ God’s mercy, Mr. Trevenean, that sent ye there. Od ! but ye maun be a grand shot ! I’m thinking your

father maun hae deer in his park, just as the Macwhapples used to have before the weary times of the Fifteen and Forty-five. And he killed it dead? Weel, I care na wha aucht it, — he's weel saired to get sic a rapagious beast pitten out o' the way. I'm sure the hale parish will thank ye, Maister Trevenean; for our minister's weel liket, though I say it that sudna say it. And yet I'm no kin to him neither. My sister, puir thing! didna think it beneath her to marry a worthy man, though he didna just happen to be come of as gude a family as her ain; and so, you see, I've consented to take her place now she's gane, and to manage his household for him, honest man! Chirsty, I'm saying, Chirsty, bring ben the supper. Ye'll no' gang awa' the nicht, Maister Trevenean? We'll put on a pair o' clean sheets on the white bed in a moment; and the herd-laddy can rin down, if ye wish, and lat them know at Port Montrosh that you're no' comin' hame. Ye'll just bide where ye are a' nicht."

Reginald, however, by what motive actuated it might be hard to determine, persisted in refusing to avail himself of the hospitality of Miss Mysie: indeed he would not even stay to partake of the meal which all united in pressing upon him, but, after a few moments' delay, took his leave. He left behind him, as may be

imagined, an impression of the most favourable kind; and he retired to his own apartment, without communicating either to Cyril or Mr. Monro that any adventure apart from common had befallen him that day.

Reginald had promised to call at the manse on the following morning; and it will readily be imagined that he did not forget his promise. His manner, indeed, during breakfast, which was abstracted, reserved, and moody, scarce passed unnoticed by his companions; and the meal was hardly finished, ere he took up his rod and basket, and, under the pretence of fishing, made for the head of the loch.

It was not customary, under the then circumstances of their position, for one of the party to interfere with the private arrangements of the other, inasmuch as the summer months were regarded by all as a season of absolute relaxation; and neither Mr. Monro nor Cyril entertaining the slightest taste for angling, Reginald was left to pursue his own humours. On, therefore, he bounded, as soon as he had turned the corner of the glen, with a step which became more and more elastic in proportion as the space between him and the manse was narrowed; while his thoughts ran before him rapidly—so eagerly, as to excite something like astonishment even in himself.

“Why should I be so anxious to see these worthy people again?” said he. “To be sure, the minister is a truly venerable man, and Miss Mysie might go upon the stage to-morrow in her own proper person; and as to Bell, certainly she is a pretty girl—a very pretty girl, and so natural and so single-minded! Nay, I can’t tell what it is that draws me thither, but I do find that the acquaintance is likely to be an agreeable one.” Yet he pursued his way as cheerfully as if the reasons of the case had been perfectly plain to his own understanding, and regretted only that so much time should be wasted in effecting its accomplishment.

When a sudden bend in the hill placed him all at once in front of the minister’s garden, Reginald ascertained by the surest of all proofs that this visit was not unexpected. Bell Livingston, with a spade or hoe in her hand, was leaning over the little rustic gate as if to rest after the labour of weeding, while her gaze was directed steadily towards the point at which a visiter from Port Montrosh might be expected to present himself. Nor had Reginald time to salute her by pulling off his bonnet, ere she pushed the gate open, and then, as if doubtful of the propriety of such an act, suddenly stopped short, while the blood mantled to her cheeks and forehead.

"You see how glad I am to take advantage of your hospitality, Miss Livingston," said Reginald, advancing towards her and extending his hand. "I told you last night that I should soon break in upon you again, though you probably did not anticipate so speedy a fulfilment of the threat. But you must blame your own kindness for this intrusion."

"We may thank our good genius for the favour, you mean," replied Bell gaily. "I assure you we have talked of nothing but yourself ever since you left us; and we are all anxious to welcome you back again, for what we all hope may prove a longer visit."

"If I were to consult only my own wishes," replied Reginald, "the visit would be long enough; but there are other considerations to be attended to — such as your grandfather's leisure, your aunt's convenience, and ——"

"And what more?" said Bell archly: "my patience perhaps? Very well, so let it be. In the mean while, I have the pleasure to assure you that my grandfather desires nothing so much as to have his leisure interrupted by your company; and that my aunt has at least a dozen stories of the Macwhapples, while yet they were in the pride of their might, which she is dying to communicate to some patient and uninitiated listener like yourself."

“And from you, Miss Livingston,” demanded Reginald in the same lively tone,—“what mark of especial favour am I to receive from you?”

“Oh, you shall hold my skein of silk while I wind it; or read aloud to me while I sew or paint; or, it may be, I may task you to transplant a flower or two, or to dig up some of the weeds which cruelly overrun these borders. Don’t flatter yourself that you are going to escape labour even from my hands. However, here comes grandpapa, who, if I mistake not, will be the first to lay upon you a command which you must not think of disobeying for your life.”

The minister came up as his grand-daughter spoke, having observed from the window of his little study the arrival of the visiter, and was not slow in pressing Reginald to become his guest at least for a few days,—just, as the good man expressed it, that he might be able to describe to his friends in the South how the clergy of the Church of Scotland really lived. Neither was Reginald prepared on this occasion, as he had been the night previously, to withstand so powerful a temptation. He said something about a disinclination to separate from his friends at Port Montrosh, and about the neglect of which he had been guilty in leaving them ignorant of the agreeable acquaintance which he had formed, as well as the necessity imposed

upon him of making some use, even of the summer, in prosecuting studies in which he was sadly deficient. But all these difficulties the minister managed to clear away. Nothing could be more easy than to bring his friends to the manse ; and as to his studies, why he might devote to these just as many hours in each day as should be agreeable to himself, without running the smallest risk of interruption. " For I generally spend my mornings alone," continued the old man, " and my worthy housekeeper has her domestic matters to arrange ; and Bell here shall be put under articles not to pester you with her chatter till the period of labour is done. And as to fishing, depend upon it there is no place in the loch equal to that bay just in front of the garden ; and in the river that falls in beyond the promontory yonder you are sure to have sport when you cannot find it elsewhere."

What could a youth of eighteen, acted upon by so many and such cogent arguments, offer in refutation of them ? Reginald yielded with a good grace, and a boy being despatched to Port Montrosh for such changes of apparel as he was likely to require, he consented to become an inmate of the manse for one week.

It would be as little interesting, as it would of course be uncalled for, were I to dete

at length either the events that occurred during the progress of these seven happy days, or the consequence to which they eventually led. When two young persons such as Reginald Trevenean and Isabel Livingston are thrown together by circumstances so peculiar as those of which some account has been given, each sees in the other more than the imagination had ever ventured to portray of beautiful in person and attractive in manners. When the mornings are spent in wandering side by side amid scenery like that which surrounds Loch Moideart; the evenings, in giving and receiving mutual delight by the interchange of lively conversation, by reading, by music, or sometimes by moonlight rambles along the margin of a quiet lake;—to hinder the growth between them of feelings such as put both peace of mind and health of body in hazard, requires a miracle which, with all possible reverence be it spoken, it comes not within the ordinary range of providential interferences to perform. To be sure, the prudent and the calculating are apt in such a case to throw as many impediments as possible in the way of so perilous an intimacy. The worldly parent or guardian is careful that on neither side shall the affections be so deeply engaged as to hinder a quiet disruption of the tie at any given moment. But

with the minister of Moideart there was little or no knowledge of the world, giving to that phrase the meaning which it usually receives; in other words, there was no disposition to watch events as they occurred with a microscopic eye, or to draw from them inferences not strictly within the range of direct and palpable consequences. The good old minister neither saw danger to his grandchild's happiness in the intimacy which she had formed, nor would have listened for a moment to the suggestion had such been made to him; while aunt Mysie either regarded the whole affair as what she was pleased to term "calf love," or consoled herself with the reflection that, "suld it tak a mair serious turn, why then a young lady come o' the house o' Macwhapple was a match for ony lord's son in the hale kingdom, lat a be a baronet." Thus were the young people left, unchecked and unawed, to indulge to their utmost limit feelings of mutual admiration and delight, which, fostered and nourished on both sides by the discovery of a thousand similarities in taste and temper, ripened within the space of a few short days into passion. Long before the week came to an end, Reginald and Isabel lived only for one another; and though no verbal communication of the fact had as yet passed between them, each knew that

the happiness or misery of the other was in his or her keeping.

There is a gentleness and timidity in our first true love, which, as it never comes but once, so would it be difficult, if not impossible, to bring back the recollection of what it was, even to those who may have long ago experienced it. The worldling has never felt, and the worldling cannot therefore comprehend it. But neither Reginald nor Isabel were, in any sense of the term, worldlings. Amid all their lonely walks, through the shady grove by day, by the margin of the cool lake at night, there had not passed between them aught of which the most rigid observer could have said with truth that it implied the existence of any other sentiments than those of the most disinterested friendship. Happy they were, perfectly happy, in one another's society; contented with the present, seldom looking forward to the future, and talking over the past only when the occurrence of some natural object chanced to bring back the memory of what might have occurred between them on a previous day. Yet was there on the spirits of both a pressure, a gentle pressure, which caused them from time to time to drop into silence—the silence of busy thought, languid, soft, soothing, exquisitely delicious, which brought with it sensations that defy the power of language to de-

scribe, and out of which to be awakened too rudely is to be brought down from heaven to earth. More especially was this the case when, after strolling arm in arm till weariness overtook them, they sat down upon a tall rock that overhung the lake, and watched, amid the silence that everywhere prevailed, the moonbeams break into long lines of light over the surface of the water. For a while no words escaped them there; indeed their whole souls appeared to be engrossed by the splendour of the night-scene, and the ideas to which it gave rise. For over the clear surface of the lake the mountains were reflected as in a mirror, but slightly ruffled by the occasional leaping of the trout; while the foliage, if it stirred at all, produced only that gentle murmur which tends to promote rather than interrupt the train of thought which such a landscape, seen at such an hour and under such circumstances, never fails to bring into play.

"What a country is yours, Isabel!" Reginald at last broke silence by exclaiming. "How magnificent the scene on which we are gazing now! No wonder that enthusiasm should become a portion of your national character. Had it been my good fortune to be born among these mountains, my last breath would have been rendered up where my first was drawn."

I should have lived and died without ever seeking to go beyond them."

"You would have done exactly as others do, Mr. Trevenean," replied Isabel in a low tone; "mixed with society as a point of duty, given yourself up to the guidance of ambition or the thirst of renown, or an indulgence of taste cast behind you as childish the dreams of early youth, and thought only of your native Highlands when sickness or sorrow bowed you down. It is not so with us: we are creatures of circumstances, beings over whom the outward forms of Nature exercise a control such as you cannot understand. Our feelings, our affections are all so constituted, that if there be no living objects to engross them, they concentrate upon the mountain or the flood. There is little of enthusiasm connected with place or country, I suspect, except among women."

"Then there is a power in association, Isabel of which, till experience brings us acquainted with it, we know not the force. Why should I, for example, the native of rich and level England, become thus strangely enamoured of your rocks and streams?"

"I cannot tell," answered Isabel sighing; "unless it be that you have passed your time agreeably among them, and know that you must by-and-by quit them for ever."

"Not for ever, Isabel," cried Reginald tenderly,—“not for ever. Let Fortune do with me what she will, I can never cease to look back upon the happy days I have spent here, or to wish that I could live them over again. And as I shall one day be master of my own time and movements, why should I despair at least of renewing them.”

“Because new ties will bind you down, new habits cast their chain around you;—because you have a part to act in the busy world with which visions of Loch Moideart must not interfere;—because, when you go hence, it will be to mix with the wealthy and the great, to become one of a mighty crowd of beings that jostle and push one against another. Oh no, Mr. Trevenean; the enthusiasm of which you speak may be strongly felt now, but it will die out and be forgotten ere a twelvemonth and a day pass over;—and that, you know, is the established time of trial for the constancy of all knights and damsels that bind themselves by a vow.”

“Dear Isabel, how can this be? Do you imagine that I can ever forget the manse, the kind good old minister, or his gentle granddaughter, my companion in so many sweet walks?”

“I do not know, Mr. Treven—”

"Not Mr. Trevenan, Isabel; Reginald—Reginald; otherwise you must be Miss Livingston."

"Well then, Reginald—dear Reginald if you will,—I do not know whether you will forget us, but I do know that we never can forget you. How, indeed, should we? Are we not your debtors for life itself? and for—nay, nay, I scarce know what I would say, except that I wish we were brother and sister."

"We may love one another as if we were, Isabel—we may live for one another as if that sweet tie bound us together. And then surely you will not persist in believing that I can be without a motive to seek Loch Moideart again? However, thank God, there is at least one more summer before us. In winter we return only to Glasgow; and when the leaf is on the tree again, how gladly will I resume my old habits! provided you continue to encourage me in them."

"I, Reginald! I will count the very hours till you return.—But the night wears apace; we had best go home now."

They rose as she said this, and retracing their steps to the manse, joined the rest of the family at prayers, in a frame of mind somewhat more pensive perhaps, but not less tranquil, than usual.

THE MAN OF MANY NAMES.

CHAPTER VI.

CONFESSIONS.

"You have stolen a march upon us, Reginald," said Cyril, gaily, to his cousin, when the latter rejoined the little circle at Port Montrosli the day after his moonlight walk with Isabel. "What have we done that we should be excluded from the agreeable society at the manse? Upon my honour, you are become a dangerous man. May I venture to ask whether the aunt or the niece is the especial object of attention?"

"Neither the one nor the other, Cyril," replied Reginald with a forced smile. "Accident enabled me to do these worthy people service, for which they are so kind as to persuade themselves that they are bound to be grateful; and so they have forced upon me hospitality which, however highly I may merit, I do not feel that I have done anything to deserve."

"He is as modest as he is captivating," Cyril jocosely; "your true Paladin,"

slays the dragon and delivers the damsel, and then vows that the honour of the feat is due to her beauty, not to his prowess. But, come now, give us a full and particular account of the minister and his household."

"Story! God bless you, I have none to tell, sir!" answered Reginald. "The minister seems to me to come as near the *beau ideal* of what a Christian pastor ought to be, as it is possible for flesh and blood to do; and his housekeeper, though odd, is kindness itself. As to the young lady, you shall judge of her for yourself whenever you give me the opportunity of introducing you to her acquaintance."

"But won't that interfere with your prior claim, good coz.?"

"If you will tell me in what my priority of claim consists, then I may be able to say. At present I am quite in the dark."

"Well, we can't acquit you of having done your best to preoccupy the ground, at all events. 'Pon my life, you are a monstrous sly fellow!"

"Not a bit, not a bit," answered Reginald, laughing. "Somewhat selfish I may have been, in seeking to engross, even for a time, all the enjoyment to myself; but your ground of complaint shall be removed, provided you consent to go with me to-morrow, where I am

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permitted to intimate that your company is expected."

"And our friend the Dominie?"
"Oh, he will be quite welcome also. You shall both go under the shadow of my wing; and I will be surety for your good behaviour till you each make out a case of confidence in his own favour."

And they did go on the morrow, and were as kindly received as Reginald had taught them to expect; the fact that they came upon his introduction being sufficient to secure for them the welcome of old acquaintance. For hospitality was yet practised in Scotland to a very large extent even towards entire strangers; who ceased at once to be accounted such, provided with the established usages of the families into whose bosom they gained admittance.

It was the month of August when the acquaintance between Reginald and Isabel began. The leaf was green, and the foliage thick and luxuriant, when they first gazed together by moonlight over the waters of Loch Moideart; the early frosts of October had browned the one and attenuated the other when they again found themselves seated on the same smooth rock. It was on the night preceding the day when Reginald was to depart for Glasgow; and though

they knew, or at least persuaded themselves, that they would meet again when summer came round, the young friends were conscious of more than the usual share of sadness that is apt to cast its shadow over the spirits of persons similarly circumstanced. What an endless vista of time do six or eight months of the future present to the eyes of persons under twenty ! Whether these months hold out the prospect of joy or of sorrow, they appear equally interminable ; and if a separation be involved in their passage, then indeed it becomes something, which to contemplate is to despair."

"You will not forget me, Isabel, when I am gone?" said Reginald, for the first time venturing to put his arm round her waist. "You will call to mind these delicious rambles, and when you sit upon this stone, think kindly of him who has so often and so happily occupied the seat beside you."

"Forget you, Reginald?—oh, never, never ! Till I knew you, I did not know how similarity of taste brings people together. I had no brother till you became such to me ; I had no friend till Providence sent you here. How, then, is it possible that I should forget, even if I be forgotten?"

"Then you never will forget, for you cannot be forgotten ! Dear, dear Isabel ! would to God

it had been my good fortune to be one of yourselves, that I might be near you at all seasons—live for you, die for you !”

Isabel could not answer ; for already the tears had broken from their fountain, and were rolling silently and slowly over her cheeks. At last one fell upon Reginald's hand as he passed it over to grasp hers.

“You weep, Isabel,” cried he : “nay, then, it is madness to keep the mask upon our brow any longer. We are young, yet I love you, dear girl—love you as man never loved woman ! Isabel, may I hope that I do not love in vain ?”

No reply escaped her. She had no power of speech ; but the throbbing heart, the quick and laboured breathing, were a thousand-fold more eloquent, than words. Inexperienced as he was in such matters, Reginald could not mistake these symptoms. He clasped her to his bosom, imprinted a kiss on her coral lips, and their fates were sealed for ever.

Neither unobserved nor disregarded on the part of Mr. Monro and Cyril had been the growing attachment between these innocent young creatures. Of some of the remarks which it drew from them notice has already been taken. It was about an hour after the occurrence of the adventure just described that the respectable confederates met.

“ Well, what have you discovered, Monro ?” demanded Cyril, while the tutor advanced towards him on a bank of level sand close to the water’s edge, which he was traversing backwards and forwards like a sentinel on duty.

“ Quite enough to set our minds at rest on one point, at all events. A more truly pastoral—nay, Arcadian scene, never was enacted in the presence of an admiring witness: gentle graspings of the hand, delicate pressures of the waist, and soft confessions, breathed rather than uttered, and as touching an interchange of plighted love and troth as the heart of the most romantic could desire.”

“ Nay, speak in plain English, man, and tell me at once what it is that you have witnessed, and how you contrived to witness it.”

“ Why, then, listen, and mark how a plain tale shall confound thy sophisms. You doubted Reginald’s warmth, or you gave him credit for more of prudence than to get entangled in a rash engagement. It is by no means impossible, that, had we continued here six months longer, matters would have gone on till the end of these months exactly as they have hitherto done. But your hour of parting has always proved a snare to young and loving hearts. I was sure that it could exert its accustomed influence here, and I resolved to verify my own

suspicious by ocular demonstration. Well, I lounged about the manse, skulking behind trees and crags, till I saw the hopeful couple sally forth. Fortunately for me, they were too much occupied with each other's conversation to pay any heed to external objects; for, taking a more abrupt turn westward than I had calculated on their doing, they actually passed within arm's length, and nothing but the stem of a thin birch to screen me. But they did pass; and following them at a respectful distance, I tracked them to the cliff of which the young lady is so fond, and there observed them sit down. You know that it is peculiarly open to the movements of a skilful eaves-dropper, for, behind — the wood closes in thickly; and there is a ledge, by creeping under which you may lay yourself within a foot of the flat surface, and yet escape detection. Well, thither I made my way; and of all that followed I leave your fertile imagination to draw a picture."

"What! you don't mean that the girl was frail, or that he took advantage of her frailty?"

"Now, by my soul! Cyril, thou art the foulest-minded youth with whom it has ever been my lot to come in contact. Without pretending to possess the gift of prophecy, I venture to foretell that there is a passion, if such it ought to be called, which will yet prove thy ruin.

Why, man, if you possessed all the skill of an Ulysses, and all the courage of a Coriolanus, your bare subserviency to love's basest and meanest part would render every other qualification useless to advance your own fortunes. There was nothing between them on which the angels might blush to look."

"Admirably summed up, most pious and honest preceptor! Now, be so good as say what did pass, seeing that as yet I know only what did not."

"Well then, in few words, this:—he avowed his attachment, she owned that he was dear to her, and their faith was plighted for ever."

"Is that all?"

"All!—in the name of fortune, what more would you have? Do not our views extend to consequences that ought to arise out of this engagement? Have you forgotten the compact into which we entered, and the promissory note which, duly signed and sealed, lies at this moment snug within my writing-desk?"

"No, nor am I indifferent to the tale that you have just told, though I do own that a degree of curiosity was excited by the peroration such as the finale scarce gratified. However, there they are, their true love given and taken, and probably some visible token of its depth mutually interchanged. What are we

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do next? How shall we prevent one or other of two events from befalling;—a premature discovery by the parents and representatives on the one hand, and the natural effects of absence in allaying the force of such fantasies on the other?"

"I don't see much difficulty in accomplishing both objects. It must be your business to deal with Reginald to-night, after he returns, so as to draw from him an admission of the fact, and the absolute surrender of himself into your hands;—it must be mine to tamper with another party, of whose foot I believe that I have got the measure, and to urge occasional meetings between the happy pair, just sufficiently frequent to keep the flame burning, and yet not so often as to excite suspicion. Reginald will be at home, or I deceive myself, by this time. If your wit has been sufficiently sharp to take the hint which I have thrown out, I advise an immediate conference."

Cyril saw the prudence of this advice, and hurried away to act upon it, while the tutor set off at a round pace in an opposite direction on some errand of his own. For the present our business is with Cyril, who, happily for his projects, had time to cast his dressing-gown about him, and sit down at the table with a book open before him, ere his cousin

step was heard in the passage. When the latter entered, moreover, he was flushed and agitated; a circumstance which furnished to Cyril the sort of cue of which he could advantageously make use. He shut his book as if startled, and rising up, entreated Reginald to say whether anything had befallen.

"Nothing in the world," replied the youth, while a deeper blush crimsoned his cheek: "what should befall in a place like this? Why should you ask the question?"

"I scarcely know, Reginald," replied Cyril gravely; "but your appearance is that of one who has been flurried, agitated, it may be alarmed, by some unlooked-for accident: and you are late, my dear cousin; the clock has struck ten a full half-hour ago."

"It is not easy to quit a country like this without being agitated," answered Reginald: "and really one cannot mark the passage of time, with the distressing thought in one's mind that by to-morrow at this time we shall be far distant."

"The country is beautiful enough," replied Cyril; "yet I remember that the day is not very distant when you heartily wished yourself back at Morley, beside your mother and your old nurse."

"Ah! that was before——"

"Before what, Reginald? Speak out, man;—nay, do not turn away as if you desired to hide your blushes, or to deceive me into a belief that there is really nothing on your mind. I know that there is. I am not blind, Reginald: neither am I unobservant. Believe me that I have seen for some time back enough, and more than enough, to make you grave, and me anxious and unhappy."

"What can you mean, Cyril? I am sure that, as far as I am concerned, nothing has befallen——"

"Of which you, or any one connected with you, need be ashamed: but a great deal, my dear fellow, that may occasion distress to yourself, and more than distress to those who take the deepest interest in you.—But I see that the glare of the lamp overpowers you. What say you—are you equal to a stroll with me by the water-side, where we may perhaps be tempted to converse more openly, seeing that the one will not have light enough to observe the effect produced upon the other's countenance."

Reginald assented; protesting, however, though in a very wavering tone, that, as far as he was concerned, there was no mystery that required elucidation. They accordingly walked out; and Cyril, putting his arm through the arm of his cousin, brought back again their con-

versation to the topic which they had partially discussed in-doors.

"I repeat, Reginald, that there is something on your mind which you would fain communicate to me, were you not fearful that I would blame, where perhaps you will find that I only compassionate. Is it not a fact that you have been too happy at the manse?"

Reginald started. Little practised in the art of deceiving, he had parried with great difficulty the indirect attacks of his cousin: how to meet this home-thrust, except by acknowledging its justice, he knew not. His reply, therefore, amounted only to a repetition of the question, "why such a notion should be encouraged?"

"Because every act—I had almost said every word and look of yours, since the day on which your acquaintance with that excellent family began, has betrayed you. Why did you take up your abode there for an entire week without communicating either to Monro or me your intention of doing so? Why have you been so shy of discussing the merits of the friends who engrossed so many of your hours? Why are you altogether so changed,—so much more thoughtful, it may be anxious, than you used to be? I am afraid, Reginald, that you have put your own peace in jeopardy. I hope only that you have not gone further."

profound secret from all who don't know it already: you must be content to correspond as little as possible: you must agree to meet but seldom, and to try the effect of absence,—whether it abates your passion, or otherwise. If it do, things will take their course, and this rash engagement, like many others, will wear out: if it do not, then you must wait your proper time. You are both very young; you know as yet nothing of the world,—probably little of yourselves. It would be madness to draw tighter a noose which has been cast a great deal too rashly. In the mean while, you may safely rely on my friendship, that whatever can be done to promote your happiness shall be done. But I warn you not to let *Monro* guess at what is in progress: he has no concealments from *Sir Charles*, and certainly would not begin by making a concealment of this. Does my counsel please you?"

"Perfectly, my dear *Cyril*," replied *Reginald*, grasping his cousin's hand: "there is truth and wisdom in every word you have spoken. It may be that I have acted rashly,—perhaps, as far as *Isabel* is concerned, ungenerously; for long years will probably pass ere the obstacles to our union moulder away. But I could not help it,—indeed I could not; and,

what is more, I never can regret it. She is the sweetest creature——”

“Ay, ay, I know all that,” interrupted Cyril gaily; “it is the old story over again. However, as I have not myself been so fortunate as to win the heart of any maiden equally sweet, we will, if you please, cut it short, and return home.”

The young men walked back, apparently well pleased with what they had respectively done and said, and without waiting for their tutor, who stayed abroad that night unusually late, retired, after making a few final preparations for to-morrow's journey, to their chambers.

body kent it I would lose my character altogether; and maybe it's no' safe."

"With me, my dear Miss Macwhapple, what danger should you apprehend? From such I am ever ready to shield you, but not to lead you into peril."

"Na, na, I dinna think you would just fling me into the loch, or do me ony ither bodily hurt; but, as the minister says, it's a rash thing to put oursel's in the way o' temptation; for wha kens how soon they may be left to themselves."

"Have I ever given you cause to suspect me of any design so atrocious? Has not my manner been throughout as respectful as even you could desire?"

"I am no' denying that you have aye behaved like a douce and weel-bred lad in my company; but we munna tamper wi 'Sautan. 'Strong desire and convenient opportunity,' ye ken, is what wonna always be resisted."

"But to-night my business is of too melancholy a nature to permit such thoughts to arise even in your company. We meet to say farewell! At an early hour to-morrow I shall be on my way from a country which contains all that I value upon earth."

"Wae's me! I am very sorry for you, Maister Monro; but dinna be chicken-hearted. I'll

no' forget ye when ye're gane; and the summer 'ill soon come round again, and bring ye back to us."

"So it will, Miss Macwhapple, provided events do not occur to carry me from Scotland altogether — if indeed worse consequences fail to arise out of them."

"Lord's sake! what do you mean, Maister Monro? Ye'll frighten me out o' my wits if ye dinna speak plain. Oh, I am as weak as water!"

As she uttered this, the lady reeled and would have fallen had not her companion caught and supported her in his arms, where she lay for some moments, apparently deprived, by excess of agitation, of all power to move or speak. Nothing could exceed the tender solicitude of Mr. Monro: he conveyed her to a bank under the oak, caused her to sit down, and passing his arm round her waist, rested her head on his shoulder. She had not, however, sat thus half a minute ere she started to her feet with a sudden bound.

"Ye've pittin me down in a dub, ye stupid fool!" cried she; "I am as weet as if I had been harled through the loch."

Even Mr. Monro, master as he was of the great art of dissimulation, found it a hard matter to sustain his gravity while witnessing this

explosion : for the ill-used shepherdess, suiting the action to the word, caught up the nether portion of her cloak, and shook it violently, protesting all the while that she was never so maltreated in the whole course of her life. "Had he nae een in his head, or did he clap her on purpose in the only puddle that was to be found far or near? But it saired her quite right; she had no business to come stralking abroad to meet him or ony ither man at sic an untimous hour at nicht." At last, however, Miss Mysie's wrath became in some measure appeased; upon which her companion led back the conversation to the point from which it had diverged.

"I am quite serious, Miss Macwhapple;—Fate has, I fear, raised up an obstacle to the accomplishment of our wishes, such as we shall never be able to surmount; for if I lose the friendship of my patron, then am I without hope of ever gaining a settlement in the world."

"But what suld gar ye lose his friendship?" demanded Miss Mysie. "Ye've been a gude and faithfu' tutor to his bairns, that I'll answer for; and ye aye tell'd me he was a generous and a gratefu' man."

"Yes, Miss Macwhapple; but he has his humours, too. This unfortunate attachment of Reginald to your niece——"

"What makes it unfortunate, Mr. Monroe?

"That they 've been ower grit, maybe, for their ain peace, I can very well believe; but I am no' thinking it has come to an engagement."

"I assure you that this very evening, on their favourite rock, they came to an explanation, and bound themselves one to the other by vows as solemn, perhaps as tender, as any that have ever passed between us."

"Lord have a care o' me! that's unfortunate indeed. Puir things! puir things! I'm sorry for them, too. Sae young and sae bonny! I'm fearfu' they have sown seed that 'ill bring forth but a crop o' sorrow."

"It was rash in the extreme," replied Monro, "yet not unnatural neither. You and I know from experience, that to control the impulse of strong passion is not an easy matter. Still, to return to the point from which I set out; this unlucky affair between the young people, if it get wind, will ruin our prospects for ever."

"And what for sould it get wind? The deed has been done in secret, and in secret lat it rest. What's onybody's business to inquire into it?"

"Then you would break off the acquaintance entirely? That were the more prudent course, I believe,—but it would be a painful one, too."

"Break it off, and break with it the heart o' puir Bell? — Na, na, Maister Monro, that'll

"I am no', in general, a freend to lang engagements," replied Miss Mysie with a marked intonation of voice; "which very seldom lead to good, which very often end in mischief: but, in this case, such an 'arrangement may be necessary. I think, however, that the minister ought to know. It's no' right for a child to keep ony secrets frae a parent."

"If the minister know, Sir Charles will soon know likewise. The minister is a very good man, but his ideas are necessarily contracted by the sort of life he has led. I venture to say, that the first use he would make of his knowledge would be to send Bell out of the way till Sir Charles should find an opportunity of recalling us all to Morley. No, no, Miss Mac-whapple; there are but two roads before us, and one or other we must follow. Either the secret must be kept faithfully, or we must make a merit of necessity, and become informers ourselves."

"I believe you are right," replied the lady: "the minister has foolish notions about propriety and decorum, and canna be trusted in a case like this. He wouldna mind poor Bell's grief a bodle, so long as he fancied he was doing what he calls his duty. You and me can manage this business ourselves."

"I think that I had better not appear in it,"

tained. The result of the examination appeared to be satisfactory, for the lady smiled as she hung up the garment to dry, and passed with a quiet tread towards her niece's apartment, from beneath the door of which the reflection of a candle still showed itself. As Miss Mysie raised the latch very gently, and Isabel took no notice of the proceeding, the former was permitted to gaze, for a moment or two, unheeded, on a spectacle which even she could not witness without emotion.

Isabel sat before her toilet, her beautiful dark hair streaming in rich and glossy masses over her shoulders. On the table beside her lay curl-papers and brushes, not yet used. A portion of her dress, cast aside, as it seemed, some time previously, hung over the back part of a chair a little way removed, while the long wick of the candle pointed out, that thoughts too interesting to be suppressed or controlled had triumphed, and that the present was forgotten amid fantasies of the past and of the future. For her attitude was that of one who is entirely engrossed by secret meditation: her forehead rested upon one arm, which again lay across the table; and her back being turned towards the door, she could neither see the tall form of her aunt as it passed the threshold, nor prepare to bid her welcome. Aunt Mysie

Mysie in a soothing tone: "to-morrow Reginald leaves us, and your young heart——"

"Oh, aunt, if you love me, say no more. I fear that I have done very wrong; but I have just taken council of God, and to-morrow grand-papa shall know all."

"And may not I too be trusted, Bell? Your grandfather loves you tenderly, but he cannot love you as I do, — being, as you are, the living image of my dear lost sister."

"Not only may you be trusted, dear aunt, but consulted,—that is, if you have patience to listen to the idle tale of an idle girl, whose heart already condemns her, and who is therefore well prepared to receive sentence of condemnation from others. Oh, aunt, I have been very, very imprudent!"

"In what respect, my love? Speak out—do not fear to unburthen your mind wholly."

"In my intercourse with Reginald, I did not know—I could not dream that it would have come to this!"

"That you should get over fond o' him, and he over fond o' you,—isna' that it? Puir bairn! if you couldna dream o' sic a thing befalling, other folk could—and see it too."

"Then why was not I warned in time? All this and much more might have been avoided had I been told of my danger."

"What danger, bairn? For my part, I dinna see muckle danger, or harm either, in two innocent and artless young creatures forming an intimacy in their youth, that promises, if weel managed, to bring comfort to their maturer years, and peace to their auld age."

"But you forget, aunt," replied Isabel, looking up with the air of one who half desires, half expects to be contradicted: "you forget that I am no fit match for Reginald Trevenan. I am but a poor portionless Highland girl—he is the heir of a title and a princely fortune."

"Ye mayna be sae rich as he, Bell—and of that I am aware the world taks muckle count. But if your blood by the grandmother's side be weighed against his, I'se warrant it 'll no' be found lighter."

"Nay, nay, it is idle to talk thus," answered Isabel, despondency again overpowering whatever of hope aunt Mysie's former sentence might have created. "Of birth I can make no boast, were such things regarded,—but they are not: and in all other respects can you imagine that Sir Charles will consider me worthy to be his son's wife—or, it may be, Reginald himself continue to think so when he is a few years older?"

"Not knowing exactly what may have passed between you, Bell, it is impossible for

me to answer for the young man's bearing. But if *he* set his heart on having you, I cannot believe that his father will, for any base or worldly motive, stand between an only son and a' his hopes of happiness."

"Much more has passed between us, aunt, than ought to have done. He told me more than it became me, perhaps, to learn; and I have concealed nothing from him."

"Then ye have plighted your true love to ane anither, and maybe exchanged tokens?"

"It is even so, aunt. He gave me this ring in return for a lock of my hair, which he told me he should wear in his bosom till he could call me his own."

"Puir things! puir young things! May ye baith be true to your vows, and may Heaven prosper them!"

"But, aunt, is this right? Is it becoming in me to have thus entangled a young man into an engagement to which his parents are not privy, and of which my grandpapa knows nothing?"

"I'll no' just say that it is right. But of the right and the wrang you ought to have thought sooner. It's done now, onyhow, and we maun mak the maist o't."

"I meant to do so, aunt, believe me,—I meant to tell all to grandpapa the first thing

brings forgetfulness, it may be all well and good to let the knot loosen of itself: but if ye baith continue in your present mind, I dinna see whatfor ye should despair of coming together yet,—that is, supposing ye have patience to bide your time. There may be difficulties in your way, and delays, and crosses; but where there's a will there's a way. Na, na, Bell, my dear, I'm no' going to wring your young breast wi' ony such ungentle treatment as that."

"Oh, aunt, you are too kind—you are too good! This is indeed much more than I could have expected even of you. And yet my mind misgives me, lest you involve both yourself and us in difficulties from which we shall never escape."

"Leave you a' that to me, my dear. I've lived langer in the world, and seen more of its ways, than ye have done; and, I dare say, will be able to get baith you and mysel' out of ony scrape that we may fall into. In the mean while, ye maun give me one solemn pledge; which is, that ye tak naeboddy else into your confidence; and that you hold no communication with Reginald, either by letter or otherwise, except with my privacy. Are you willing to do that?"

"Oh, aunt, not that only, but anything else

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE INTRIGUES.

At an early hour on the following morning, Cyril, Reginald, and their worthy tutor, Mr. Monro, were pursuing their way towards the metropolis of the West. A cart, with a seat across, the ordinary vehicle of the country, conveyed them and their baggage through the Highland passes, and was exchanged only at Luss, on Loch Lomond side, for a post-chaise. Neither the magnificence of the surrounding scenery, however, nor the remarkable elasticity of the atmosphere, seemed to have any effect in leading on conversation: all were as moody and silent as if each had found in his own thoughts as much as he desired to interest, if not to amuse; so that when they alighted, after night-fall, at the door of their lodging in College-street, they did so without having interchanged five sentences throughout a journey of sixty miles in extent.

A resumption of his studies, and a renewal

den blow. If anything can bring matters to an issue it will be this, though even of it I have my doubts."

Reginald had written to Isabel repeatedly, his letters being filled on each occasion with protestations of the warmest love. He had received answers at first regularly, all of them expressing a spirit similar to that which pervaded his own; but of late Isabel had become slack in her correspondence, and the anxious mind of a lover detected, or fancied that he did, a growing reserve in her style and mode of expression. The circumstance created, of course, both grief and surprise: grief, because he was apt to fancy either that she must be ill or grown indifferent; surprise, because the more he reflected on the subject, the less did these conclusions satisfy him. It was after the receipt of one of these somewhat abrupt epistles that Reginald found himself accosted by his cousin in one of the most retired walks of the College garden.

"You are out of sorts, Reginald," said Cyril: "you have been out of sorts for some time. What has befallen you?"

"God knows, Cyril," replied Reginald, "I am what I ever was,—in mind and in body the same; but others seem to change, and I can't tell why."

and Reginald. "You may act as you like; but, since the time is so short, I will wait at an hour hence."

"What shall we say to Monro?" asked Cyril.

"What should we say? That we desire to leave the scene of our pleasant holidays once more; or, if you like it better, that we wish to bid farewell to the minister's family. Surely there can be nothing in such a tale to rouse suspicion or surprise."

"I dare say not," replied Cyril carelessly; "and here in good time comes the Dominie himself. By Jove! he looks as if he had some intelligence to convey to us. Do you observe how light his tread is, and how full his eyes are gleaming?"

Before Reginald could answer, Mr. Monro came beside them; nor were they long kept in suspense as to the nature of the communication which it was his business to make.

"Of all the birds in the air," cried he, "do you think have just alighted in Glasgow?"

"The young men, as might have been expected, could not possibly guess; and their feelings could be imagined when the tutor abruptly told them, "Personages not less important than ladies from the manse of Moideart. Here

meditate a thousand extravagant schemes. But all is forgotten now: you are still mine own Isabel; dear to me as you ever were, affectionate and confiding as I used to find you when our intercourse was the most unrestrained."

"'Deed Reginald," said Miss Mysie, whose presence had in no degree cast a spell over the meeting of the young lovers, and who looked not unmoved, albeit little given to the melting mood, "if ony blame be due anent this matter, you maun lat me bear it. I didna think it quite proper for a young leddy to be writing what ye ca' love-letters to a young gentleman at college. To be civil to a freend is anither thing; but the Macwhapples were aye famed for their discretion in sic like affairs; and Bell has been taught to consider herself mair a Macwhapple than a Livingston. So dinna lat that flee stick in the wa', for she had nae hand in it."

"Let us talk no more of blame or the grounds for it," exclaimed Reginald in a joyous tone: "here you both are, what I have always found you, frank, true, generous, warm-hearted. Tell me rather by what fortunate accident you have been brought into the Low Country at the very moment I was meditating an inroad into the heart of the Highlands."

"Troth, Reginald," replied Mysie, somewhat confused, "we came entirely on business

circumstances so favourable, the deuce is in it if we fail to make our own out of it. In the mean while, I must get round my old woman; and as you would be considerably in the way during a conference so delectable as ours, I pray you to shift for yourself, while ‘on the wings of love I seek my gentle mate.’”

Cyril laughed, took his friend’s hint, and the confederates parted, one turning short off at College-street, the other traversing High-street and the Trongate towards the Buck’s Head.

The meeting between aunt Mysie and Mr. Monro was of a kind which, however interesting to the individuals themselves, scarce demands repetition. Neither, indeed, did any event befall of which it is necessary to take especial notice, till the postman’s double rap in College-street announced next day the arrival of despatches for the Treveneans. The little party were at breakfast, when a packet of letters was handed in, and each seized with avidity such as were addressed to himself. That for Reginald was from his father, and ran thus:—

“DEAR REGINALD,

“It gives me sincere pleasure to hear of the improvements that have taken place, as well in your bodily health as in your mental acquire-

ments. You need not be told how very precious you are in the sight both of your mother and of me; for besides that you are our only son—indeed our only child, we cannot but regard you as the sole representative of a family which for many generations has filled no mean place in the aristocracy of Cornwall. Neither can you doubt that your peculiar position imposes both upon you and me duties by which, under other circumstances, we should not feel ourselves so closely tied down. I am bound to see you settled, with the prospect of giving future heirs to Morley, with as little delay as may be consistent with propriety; and you are bound to offer to the arrangement no unnecessary obstacles.

“You are aware of the intimacy which subsisted in early life between Lord Templetown and myself,—an intimacy which differences in political opinions of very recent growth could scarcely interrupt. Times are changed however, and Lord Templetown, awakened to the real views of the party with which he has hitherto acted, is disposed to abandon them, and to take the same side of the question with us. He has even offered to join his interest with mine in order to return you, whenever you come of age, for the county; and more than insinuates, that nothing would make him so happy as a

match between his daughter Julia and yourself. You have not seen much of Lady Julia: we have seen a good deal of her lately, and I assure you that a more amiable person never lived. She will make you an admirable wife in every respect; and as she is an only child, her dowry will be princely. In one word, I wish you to come home as soon after the receipt of this as possible, in order that we may make you acquainted with your future bride.

"You will, I believe, be twenty next birthday; and Lord Templetown and myself have agreed that the marriage shall not take place till you are of age. In the mean while, you and Lady Julia ought to know something of one another: after which you can either travel on the Continent or join the army, according to your own taste. I have written by this post to Mr. Monro and Cyril. With your mother's best regards, your affectionate father,

"C. TREVENEAN."

The expression of Reginald's countenance while perusing the above sufficed to make his companions aware that the intelligence which he had received was of more than common interest. He did not, however, make any disclosure; but, putting the letter in his pocket, rose and quitted the room. Cyril was not

slow to follow, and soon drew from him a declaration not only of his father's views, but of his own determinations. No consideration on earth should ever induce him to wed Lady Julia. He could not, perhaps, refuse to be introduced to her,—nor might it be prudent to avow his intentions elsewhere; but he should take every method of conveying to the young lady such an impression of him as should render her quite as disinclined to the match as himself. He must say, that he regarded the whole business as a piece of extreme parental tyranny. His recollections of his father were all forbidding in the extreme; and it seemed as if the future was not destined to efface them. He was exceedingly grieved; but, on the whole, he felt as much of indignation as of sorrow.

"And poor Isabel," said Cyril, "what will she say to this?"

"She shall never know it, Cyril. Why should I distress her by communicating circumstances which cannot possibly affect her one way or the other?"

"Pardon me, Reginald; I know you at least as well as you know yourself, and I am convinced that when they once get you to Morley, in the society of a girl so beautiful, so accomplished as Lady Julia, you will yield to your duty as a son what you may at first refuse to a

softer passion. No, no, it were far better to prepare poor Isabel for what will happen, than to let the blow come upon her suddenly and crush her."

"I tell you, Cyril, that they may hew me to pieces, but they will never make me forget Isabel, or violate the pledge that I have given her."

"Pooh, pooh, I am sure that you mean all this; but will you be able to act up to it? Not a whit. Lovers' vows, you will be told, are never registered in heaven. You will be reminded of your own youth, of Isabel's imprudence, when your *vows* were spoken; you will be shown that the heir of the house of Treve-nean is not in such matters his own master; and though you may listen at first unwillingly and distrustingly to the tale, it will in the end produce its effect. No, no, Reginald, you did wrong in stealing poor Isabel's affections as you have done; you are bound by honour, by humanity, to break with her gently and by degrees."

"Break with her, Cyril!—may Heaven break with me if I do! If I thought my father would insist on this horrid match, I would take such steps as should render compliance with his wishes impossible."

"You may assure yourself of your father's

at once to an explanation, and release one another from your trammels."

"You are my good genius, Cyril, reading my thoughts, preventing my wishes, inspiring me with resolution to act up to my own determinations. The moment I read my father's letter the idea of a private marriage occurred to me; though there needed your suggestion to mould it into form. I tell you, that not our happiness only, but our honour depends on the accomplishment of a promise given on both sides in perfect good faith, and confirmed by the most solemn appeals to Heaven. Of my father's readiness to forgive such an act, I entertain more doubts than you seem to do. But better go without his forgiveness altogether, than be forced into the breach of a solemn engagement by marrying a woman whom I should render unhappy because I did not love her. I will seek Isabel instantly, and try whether she can be prevailed upon to become mine forthwith."

"Stop a moment, my dear Reginald. You are too ready to leap at your conclusions. I advise no such thing as a private marriage: on the contrary, my advice is, that each party give and take back the pledges rashly interchanged; and that you leave it to the future

vinced that you will do far better to disentangle yourselves altogether."

"That, my dear Cyril, is quite out of the question," replied Reginald: "I consider myself united to Isabel already; and by confirming the union in the face of the church, I but rivet the chain."

But why pursue this narrative in detail, or why carry the reader to the Buck's Head, where interviews, bearing on the same point, though somewhat differently conducted, occurred between other parties? Enough is done, when I state in few words, that Isabel's scruples,—the scruples of a romantic and doting girl of sixteen—gave way, though not without a struggle, before the expostulations and arguments of her grand-aunt. The result was, that, with a facility which belongs exclusively to Scotland, the names of the parties were published, as it is called, thrice in one day;—in other words, that the session's clerk of St. Bridget's, standing at the church-door, proclaimed to empty walls, that Reginald Trevenean and Isabella Livingston, both of that parish, proposed to become man and wife. This done, the obliging official wrote out a certificate that all had been done in order. It was carried to the minister, a stranger of course to both parties, and he attended at

CHAPTER IX.

ANXIETY.

THE wedding took place on a Tuesday, and throughout that day and the following the happiness of the young couple seemed to be complete. Not even the knowledge that on Thursday they must separate, appeared, except at intervals, to distress them. But our happiest hours, as has often been noted, always fly the fastest, and the moment of parting came. It was as bitter as, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, might be expected. Poor Isabel clung to her husband's embrace as if she meant to die there, and Reginald tore himself from her at last more like a maniac than a rational being. I need not add, that plans were fully arranged for carrying on constant intercourse by letter, or that each strove to inspire the other with hopes which both in reality rejected.

"Do not doubt that we shall soon meet

again, dear Isabel," said Reginald. "My father must be humoured; but I am his only son, and when he knows that I have given heart and hand to one so deserving in all respects of a better match, he will not long continue obstinate. By next summer, at the latest, I shall return to fetch you. And my mother—oh! you will be delighted with her, and she will be proud of her gentle and beautiful daughter."

"I do not doubt, Reginald—I cannot doubt that you are mine; and that thought will support me. But to part thus early—oh! my poor heart would break did I not feel that your happiness requires this sacrifice on my part."

Nor was there any want of sympathy on the side of those who had played minor parts in the drama. Aunt Mysie strove to console the bridegroom; Cyril spoke in language of encouragement, almost of endearment, to the bride, undertaking at any moment to be the bearer of such communications as either party might be unwilling to entrust to the post, and assuring both of his settled conviction that all would yet be well. Thus, amid sorrow, not unmitigated by the influence of strong hope, and tears, bitter, but not entirely springing from the fountains of grief, Reginald bade adieu to his wife of eight-and-forty hours, who betook herself to her native valley, there to

pine and weep in secret, while he hastened to conceal his own emotions by mixing in the crowd.

I am not going to describe either the particulars of Reginald's journey homewards, or the nature of the reception which met him at its close. The latter was, on the side of his father, austere enough ; on the part of his mother, of a mixed nature, seeming to imply that affection was held back from indulging itself by some unexpressed conviction that restraint was necessary. Neither was he allowed time to breathe, ere his introduction to Lady Julia took place. She chanced at the moment to be a visiter at Morley—brought thither doubtless for a special purpose ; and while his spirits were yet depressed by the memory of scenes gone by, and painful anticipations of the future, he found himself thrown into her society. She was all, and more than all, that his father had described her to be—beautiful, accomplished, full of grace, full of talent ; yet his heart told him that there were wanting those peculiar attractions for which, according to his present view of these matters, neither beauty nor talent could compensate. Lady Julia was, in everything where heart is concerned, the very opposite of his own gentle and confiding Isabel. High-born, already familiar with the gay world, accustomed to keep

her genuine feelings so completely under control that they were never seen to work, she had smiles at command for such as appeared to merit them, and cool indifference at the service of all whom she did not consider it worth while to captivate or conciliate. Moreover, Lady Julia was somewhat dogmatical in her mode of expression. She had read much, knew a great deal more than the generality of women under twenty, and, being an only child, had learned to treat her own judgment with peculiar respect.

Such a person might be well qualified to dazzle and attract amid a crowd; but she was not calculated to win in seclusion the affections of a young man naturally shy, and therefore averse to display even in another.

Neither was Reginald more taken with the manners and address of her noble father. Smooth, civil, courteous, the peer displayed in every movement the good breeding as well as the selfishness which rarely fail to spring from an intermixture in what is called public life. He was one who appeared always to have in view some end which was not always apparent to others. His conversation, though diplomatic, was strongly imbued with party spirit: he never spoke from the heart—he spoke always from the head. Now Reginald was no politician: his ideas of happiness were of a much more

humble order, bringing with them pictures of domestic quiet, the interchange of kindly feeling, and the diffusion of contentment over a narrow circle; and he therefore felt that, had he been at liberty to do so, he should not have chosen a partner for life from such a school.

The Templetowns remained at Morley about a week after the arrival of the young men, when they departed for London. Reginald saw them to the carriage, and when it drove off, flattered himself that for a time at least he would be permitted to enjoy undisturbed the communion of his own thoughts. But he was mistaken; for the sound of wheels was yet audible from the steps when his father desired his attendance in the library. Reginald obeyed, not without a lively suspicion that the business on which they were going to enter would prove the reverse of agreeable. He sat down, however, in the chair to which Sir Charles pointed; while Sir Charles, occupying another at the opposite side of the fireplace, proceeded to open the conference.

“You have now been several days under the same roof with Lady Julia, Reginald, and I wish to know what you think of her?”

“That she is a very charming person,” replied Reginald,—“as accomplished as she is beautiful.”

"You are aware of the situation of Templetown and I have no objection to my father."

"I know that you have a wish for my marriage, but I am not aware that you have any objection."

"Then it is my duty to object," replied Sir Charles, "I have obtained from his daughter a promise to regard you favourably, and it is so good as to come to a definitive arrangement. I will not to defer the ceremony until the next year, under existing circumstances, it is best to dispense with the usual things in a train for the present, as we have agreed on the settlement for the season you will be a bride."

"Surely, my dear Julia, and I are to be married? We are as usual, indeed I have a sentence with her in my pocket."

"Lady Julia is a very sensible girl, and to have no will but to do what Charles coldly; and an equal readiness to do what she likes."

"On any subject except marriage."

to do so," answered Reginald: "but where the happiness or misery, not of myself alone, but of another is concerned, pardon me, dear sir, if I require time for deliberation."

"The happiness of another!" cried Sir Charles, looking keenly in his son's face: "what other?"

"Of Lady Julia, to be sure," replied Reginald, blushing. "Were I to give my hand where I did not give my heart, her happiness not less than my own would be compromised."

"Oh, is that all?" said Sir Charles slowly. "I thought perhaps there might have been some young person in Scotland whose happiness would be shipwrecked by your becoming the husband of another. If it be on Lady Julia's account that your fears are excited, I beg of you to lay them aside. She has spoken her mind freely—she will not be miserable as your wife."

Reginald shook in his chair, for there crossed his mind an undefined suspicion that more was meant by this than met the ear; yet he put a restraint upon himself, while he repeated his readiness to obey his father in all things which were neither inconsistent with reason nor opposed to delicacy and common justice. "But to plunge into an affair of this sort without having ascertained whether my habits are likely

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"What is the matter?" replied Cyril anxiously.

"Oh, that cursed Lady Julia! My father has run the matter into a positive engagement, and insists on my soliciting her hand within four-and-twenty hours. How am I to evade the order? how shall I be able to struggle through my difficulties?"

"Pooh, pooh! he has done nothing so extravagant," replied Cyril; "you must have mistaken his meaning—he cannot intend anything of the sort."

"I tell you there is no mistake," exclaimed Reginald. "I am peremptorily desired to write to her to-morrow. But I will do no such thing;—I will rather go and confess all, and then let him deal with me as he sees best."

"Nay, nay, Reginald, you must not take that step neither. Consider, I pray you, the consequences, not only to yourself, but to others. We must work for delays yet awhile; and I think we shall be able to obtain them. I will go to your father."

"Do, my dear fellow, do; and God prosper you!"

Cyril went accordingly, and having been closeted with Sir Charles about half an hour, returned to Reginald with the joyful intelligence that he would not be required to write to Lady

Julia on the morrow. Nor did his influence end there: Reginald found, on resuming his place in the family circle, that both Sir Charles and his mother were inclined to soften in the reserve with which they had hitherto treated him. To be sure the former was not affectionate—he had never been affectionate in his bearing towards his son, but he was at least civil; and the latter appeared to keep her tender feelings under control not without a great and constant effort. Still Reginald was far from happy, and the constant wear and tear of anxiety began ere long to tell upon his health.

So passed the season of spring and the early months of the summer. From Scotland letters came frequently, addressed, as it had been arranged that they should be, to Cyril; in the perusal of which, albeit they were most of them deeply tinged with melancholy, Reginald found his chief consolation. For they were all such as he had reason to expect from Isabel; warm, devoted, trusting,—interspersed indeed with gentle complaints rather against fortune than her husband, but never bordering upon impatience. His answers were, as may be imagined, dictated all of them in a similar spirit. He cheered his young bride; bade her hope for better times,—lamented the difficulties by which they were beset, and sum-

med up all by protesting the unchangeableness of his affections. At last, however, intelligence arrived which caused both to Reginald and Cyril the most intense anxiety. The good old minister, it appeared, had been taken alarmingly ill, and his life was despaired of.

"What is to be done now?" said Reginald, handing the letter to his cousin. "While she had a home in the manse I could leave her with an easy mind; but whither can she go after the death of her grandfather? This sort of delusion cannot be continued, Cyril,—I must tell all; and though my mother is changed towards me, it may be best to make her the channel of communication with my father."

"If you say one word on the subject, Reginald, you ruin yourself, and me, and Isabel. We must fall upon some means of providing a home for her a little while longer. I will go to Scotland immediately, and, by pretending to Monro that she is my wife, prevail upon him to watch over and protect her. Besides, she has aunt Mysie, you know,—an excellent creature in her way, though not quite presentable at Morley."

Reginald's principles were too correct not to shrink a little from the proposed arrangement. He had not scrupled to conceal his own marriage with Isabel; but the idea of permitting another, even though that other was Cyril, to

appear in the light of her husband, wounded his sense of delicacy. He hesitated, and then said that he feared the plan would not answer.

"If we must carry on the cheat for any time longer, it were best to give to Monro an undivided confidence. Let him be aware that Isabel is my wife, and he will doubtless deal as fairly by her as if he were led to suppose that she was yours."

"You are not jealous, Reginald?" said Cyril with a sort of half sneer, which he was unable at all times to repress.

"Of whom?" demanded Reginald, somewhat moved.

"Pooh, pooh! of no one: I was only joking — But, seriously, I fear your device won't answer. Monro will feel in your case that he has been ill-used, and is not unlikely to revenge himself by making a premature disclosure: whereas, if he is taught to look upon me as the culprit, he will probably do his best to aid us in our difficulties. Still, I am quite ready to act in any way you may desire."

I have spoken of Reginald throughout as of one, the good qualities of whose heart were far more conspicuous than the strength of his judgment. He was never a match for his cousin in argument; and, on the present occasion, the same result took place that had invariably occurred

as often as they chanced to differ in opinion. Cyril's views of the manner in which it behoved them to deal with existing difficulties prevailed. It was agreed that each should contribute a portion from the allowance made to them by Sir Charles towards the maintenance of Isabel and her aunt; and that Cyril, under the pretext of spending a few days in London, should set out for Scotland on the morrow. All other arrangements were, moreover, committed to him. He was to be guided by her wishes in the choice of a residence; he was to explain to her as much as he might deem prudent, of the extreme delicacy of the position in which his cousin stood; and, finally, to make her aware of the unalterable affection with which she continued to be regarded. "And, above all, Cyril, do not neglect to assure her that I have made up my mind as to the necessity of terminating this state of suspense with as little delay as possible. Tell her that no considerations of prudence or duty shall hinder me from openly claiming her as mine before the year shall expire. You may describe to her how wretched I am,—how my very health gives way under the pains of separation. But, above all, mark well how she bears up. If anxiety be making any inroad on her constitution, then, let come what will, I go to her on the instant."

Cyril promised to attend rigidly to the instructions which he had received, and to use all possible skill in leading Isabel into a cheerful acquiescence with the plans proposed by her husband. He then withdrew, as if to prepare for his journey; but being met on the landing-place by Sir Charles, followed the latter, at his particular desire, into his dressing-room. They remained shut up together for a full hour, at the termination of which Cyril proceeded to his own apartment, and was not seen again by any member of the family till dinner-time. It was during the progress of the meal that he intimated, as if by chance, his intention of visiting London. But no questions were put to him touching the nature of the business that carried him there; and when it was found next morning that he had actually gone, nobody expressed surprise. Yet was his absence felt by one member of the family as a grievous calamity. Reginald was now without one friend to whom, let happen what might, he could open his mind. The means, too, of exchanging communications with Isabel were cut off: for though he could write as freely as ever, it had been settled that Isabel should not answer his letters till Cyril returned. In every point of view, therefore, his situation was so irksome, that the effects of

anxiety became more and more visible in him every day.

Such was Reginald's state both of body and mind, when, on the fourth day after Cyril's departure, a gentle tap at the door of his room gave notice that some one required admission. He answered it by desiring the party to walk in; and Mrs. Daller, his old nurse, with whom, by some accident or another, he had never conversed in private since his return from the North, entered. She closed the door cautiously after her, and approached him.

"You are ill and you are anxious, Mr. Reginald," said she; "and others are anxious about you. Why all this mystery and concealment? Why is Mr. Cyril so constantly with your father, where you ought to be? And why should he go to Scotland on business that concerns other people?"

"Good God! Mrs. Daller, who told you Cyril had gone to Scotland?"

"Have I neither eyes nor ears? Do you think I have not seen and heard more than, maybe, I was intended to see and hear. Oh, Mr. Reginald, your mother's heart is as warm to you as ever! Go and tell her all. She will help you out of your distresses, if it be possible to do so; and if not, she will tell you how to bear them."

"Would to God I had done so from the first!" exclaimed Reginald bitterly: "for the disclosure must come sooner or later; and why not in the beginning as well as in the end?"

"And that is true indeed" continued she: "therefore go, my dear child—go now while she is alone. Your father is out, and is not expected to return for some time. You will find your lady mother in the drawing-room. Go and make a clear breast at once."

Reginald prepared to follow the admonitions of his kind-hearted nurse, and was hurrying down stairs for the purpose, when the voice of Sir Charles calling to him from the landing-place arrested his steps. It was his father's wish that he should accompany him in a ride to Truro, and Reginald could not refuse to comply. Accordingly, instead of seeking the drawing-room, he turned his steps towards the stable; and an opportunity of confiding his griefs to a bosom which would have felt for, and rightly dealt with them was lost,—and, taking inclination on his part into account, it never came again.

CHAPTER X.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH.

WHEN Cyril Trevenean quitted Morley, he gave out that the period of his absence would not exceed a fortnight. A full month expired ere he returned. During that interval he had written twice to Reginald; taking care, however, to express himself with so much caution, that had the letters fallen into other hands than those for whom they were intended, no harm could have arisen. He stated, indeed, as a piece of news in which his cousin was likely to take some interest, that the good old minister at Loch Moideart was dead, and that his granddaughter and sister-in-law were removed to Glasgow. With respect, again, to their old tutor, he, it appeared, was wavering as to the plan of life which he should permanently follow; whether to go into the Scotch Church, or turn his attention to the law. But, in the mean while, he also had established himself in Glas-

gow, where he took private pupils, and attended lectures on chemistry, ecclesiastical law, and divinity.

From all this Reginald was enabled to collect that Isabel had chosen Glasgow as the place of her new abode, and that Mr. Monro had agreed to protect her there. So far his doubts and anxieties were allayed, and he strove to assure himself that things were in as good a train as the untoward circumstances by which he was encumbered would allow.

Throughout the whole of that long and dreary month Reginald had not received a single line from Isabel. Though he had consented to endure this state of things when Cyril quitted him, still, as he had done so under the idea that the privation would endure only for a couple of weeks at the longest, its continuance during twice that space wounded him deeply. Not that distrust of any human being entered into his mind; he believed, on the contrary, that Isabel was, like himself, unchangeable, and that Cyril was doing all that could be done to render his condition easy; yet an intense anxiety touching the future, together with a consciousness that he had not acted generously in times past, ate into his soul, and began seriously to affect his health. His step was no longer light and buoyant, and his cheek

became as pallid as it used to be in early life. Nor did the altered condition of his appearance fail to attract the attention of those about him. His mother's eye would follow him, as he glided about, with a tenderness of expression which she vainly strove to conceal; and even his father's manner became softened by the contemplation of his distress. Yet they equally shunned coming with him to any explanation, or questioning him as to the causes of his dejection. The consequence was, that when Cyril did return, even he expressed himself shocked at the change in his cousin's appearance;—a natural movement which not even the recollection that by such means alone must his own ends be accomplished could immediately control.

Cyril brought with him, what was of infinitely more value to Reginald than all the medicine in the world—a long and delightful letter from Isabel, in which she expressed herself in the warmest terms of his cousin's kindness, and very contentedly of the situation in which he had placed her. She spoke, indeed, with natural sorrow at the decease of her kind old grandfather, and did not disguise the reluctance which she felt to quit the scenes of her youth; yet there was a resignation, almost a cheerfulness, in the tone of the letter, which

excited in him scarcely less of surprise than of satisfaction. She said, for example, that Cyril had convinced her how necessary it was for his peace that she should submit for some time longer to the pain of a separation. "And the knowledge of that fact," continued she, "makes even this sad state of widowhood endurable. Neither will I add, what my own heart assures me is uncalled for, the expression of a hope that you will think of me as of one having no wish, no desire, except to promote your welfare. Do not, therefore, place yourself in opposition to your father by making any premature disclosure. I can never be unhappy so long as I feel that your interests are advanced at the expense of a little personal suffering on my part."

Reginald was cheered by the perusal of this letter, and for a day or two both his manner and appearance indicated as much: but the poison had entered into his system, and he soon relapsed again. His father became at length alarmed.

"I have been watching you for some time, Reginald," said he one morning, when, either by chance or design, they found themselves sauntering together through the park; "and I do believe you are seriously ill. Surely the

affair of Lady Julia does not prey upon your spirits?"

"I have not thought much of it since you were so good as to drop the subject, sir," replied Reginald.

"That's right, very right. No doubt I had set my heart on the match, and am still most reluctant to consider it as done with; but it is quite clear you are not in a condition to marry any one at present. What do you think? Would a tour on the Continent, or a year's sojourn in the mild climate of the Mediterranean, be of use to you? My opinion is that it would: and who knows, but that, on your return, you might view things in a different light, and become, what we once hoped you would be, a source of real comfort to your mother and myself."

Reginald's heart swelled within him. He would have opened out the innermost thoughts of his mind, indeed, and made a full disclosure; had not the recollection that such a proceeding would compromise more than himself restrained him. He therefore confined his reply to a general expression of thanks for his father's kindness, and a sort of vague concurrence in the proposed tour. At the same time he had no wish to quit England before the

beginning of winter. The climate of Morley during autumn was sufficiently mild ; and as he had had no pheasant-shooting for a couple of seasons, he was anxious to ascertain whether he had entirely forgotten how to use a gun in cover. Now as Sir Charles had lost nothing of his own passion for field-sports, such an avowal on his son's part produced the best effect. He was extremely glad to find that Reginald had still something of the man about him, and certainly would not urge him to forego a pleasure in itself so rational.

The consequences of this apparently important conference were to place Reginald on a much more agreeable footing towards the rest of the family than he had occupied for some time. He was no longer regarded with an eye of suspicion, and had things gone on smoothly elsewhere, he would have been comparatively happy : but this was not the case. For about a month after Cyril's return from Scotland, Isabel continued to write as she had ever done : at the end of that period her letters began to arrive less frequently, and to breathe a more constrained spirit. At first he endeavoured to account for the circumstance by conjuring up one or other of the many reasons by the help of which men are accustomed to obscure their own judgment on matters which they are not

willing to try fairly. But finding this resource fail, he had at last recourse to Cyril, into whose hands he put a short note. It did not contain any direct complaint of want of attention on his part, but breathed a spirit concerning which he was at a loss to determine whether he ought to regard it as that of indifference or dejection. Cyril read the letter, and returned it with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"What does that movement mean?" demanded Reginald.

"Oh, nothing,—or, at least, next to nothing. Isabel was very young when you married her. She had never seen the world, and therefore I find very little in the tone even of that letter to excite surprise."

"What!" cried Reginald, "is it not essentially different from the style in which she used to write?"

"I admit the fact. But remember that Isabel is now the inhabitant of a great town. When she first began to correspond with you, her list of acquaintances went not beyond the circle of her own family: probably it is greatly enlarged by this time, and her leisure is of course curtailed in proportion."

"I don't understand you, Cyril. You cannot mean to insinuate——"

"My dear fellow, I never deal in insinu-

He spoke to her on the subject, and she only ridiculed his fears. He hinted to her that he was aware of circumstances which rendered extreme caution on her part necessary. At this the lady fired up, and told him plainly that she was her own mistress, and would not be dictated to by him or any one as to the line of conduct which she might be disposed to pursue. Still, he brings no accusation of guilt against her; his charge goes no farther than levity, as you may perceive if you read the concluding paragraph of his letter.

Reginald seized the paper with a trembling hand, and read, at the place which his cousin pointed out to him, as follows:—

“It is indeed very distressing to be obliged to communicate intelligence which must, I am afraid, occasion great pain to him who receives it: but the pledge which I gave you at parting requires that on this subject I should practise no reserve. I am afraid that you have been deceived in this girl. Whether or not she be a guilty creature, I will not take it upon me to say; but you shall know exactly what befel since I last communicated with you, and must yourself judge of the measures which it may be wise to adopt.

“In spite of my earnest remonstrances, she

has not only refused to drop Mr. Lorimer's acquaintance, but has thrown herself in his way more frequently than ever ;—nay, I have been able to trace the interchange of *billets-doux* between them ; and once or twice she has received visits from him at her own lodgings. Now I have no right to assume that these visits are for other than the purest purposes ; but if she be married, they are, to say the least of it, very unbecoming. My great hope is, that so far you may have deceived me, and that no tie more binding than an engagement is between you."

Reginald gasped for breath. He returned the letter to Cyril, threw himself in a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"The thing must not rest here, Cyril," cried he at length ; "I will sift it to the bottom. I will set off for Glasgow immediately, be the consequences what they may."

"You had better not, Reginald," replied the other. "Let things remain as they are at least a little longer ; for if she be guilty, you will know it soon enough."

"I cannot know the worst too soon," exclaimed Reginald, starting up. "I will not even stop to say farewell to my father ; I will go on the instant."

"I tell you that you need not go, Reginald: you would learn at Glasgow no more than I can state to you in this room. Isabel is gone;—she eloped with Mr. Lorimer the very day after the letter was written of which you have just read a portion. See, here are my proofs."

Cyril handed a second letter to his cousin which he had received that day. Like the former, it was from Monro, and it contained only two hurried lines.

"MY worst apprehensions have been realized: Isabel is faithless. She and her paramour went off at an early hour this morning in a post-chaise, and as yet I have been unable to trace them.

"Yours,

"D. MONRO."

The letter dropped from Reginald's hand, and he became deadly pale. His breathing was suspended; he reeled, and would have fallen had not his cousin supported him to a seat. Cyril sat down beside him, and strove, by a thousand kind expressions, and all the arguments which good feeling usually dictates, to recall him to self-possession. "I have no real consolation to offer," continued he,—"*none at least of which at this moment you can feel the*

force: but the time will come, and quickly too, I trust, when your own good sense will suffice to assure you, that since such a blow was to fall, it could not have fallen at a better time. I pray you, Reginald, to look the evil in the face, and to determine what you desire to be done. Shall I undertake to search after the fugitive, or will you?"

"Neither the one nor the other," cried Reginald, using a great exertion and recovering the command over himself. "So light a wanton is not worth pursuing—so faithless a woman is not deserving of a moment's thought; let her go her own way. So soon, so very soon—not yet twelve months parted! Gracious powers! who could have thought it? And she so artless, as it seemed,—so confiding, so candid! O, Cyril, that I had followed your advice, and withdrawn myself ere that fatal knot was tied! O that I had sooner intrusted you with the state of my own feelings! and then perhaps all might have been avoided."

"It is no use, my dear fellow, to lament the past," said Cyril kindly: "the great matter is to consider how we shall use the future. Now I am not without hopes that this may be a marriage jaunt after all; in which case, as the bride will not be forward to publish her own dis-

grace, we can easily let the matter rest where it is. You will not claim her—she will not claim you, and aunt Mysie having very little interest in the matter of your unlucky scrape, there will be no evidence to show that a marriage has taken place at all. However, this, I am afraid, is not the time for leading you into a dispassionate consideration of your own circumstances. The shock must be got over first, the agony of grief diminished; and there is no means so effectual for that purpose as change of scene. What say you, shall we act upon your father's hint and set out for the Continent?"

"For any place and at any moment you choose," exclaimed Reginald bitterly: "to me all places are alike, all countries the same.—So young, so beautiful, so gentle, yet so false!"

Cyril quitted his cousin's apartment while the latter was thus giving vent to his feelings, and was shut up, perhaps a quarter of an hour, with Sir Charles. When he came forth again, it was to direct immediate preparations to be made for his own and his cousin's departure. As it would be necessary for the travellers to remain a couple of days in London, whither the heavy baggage could be forwarded, these were completed so soon, that the carriage made its appearance at the hall within an hour of the moment when the project was first started. But

in Reginald neither the extraordinary rapidity of the whole proceeding, nor the calm and prepared manner in which his father and mother took leave of him, produced the smallest effect. He went through the process of bidding them farewell, as it were, mechanically; and he was still lost amid the mazes of his own maddening reflections long after Morley, with its woods and hills were out of sight.

CHAPTER XI.

FAMILY ARRANGEMENTS.

THE halt of the relatives in London did not exceed the period that was absolutely required for completing their arrangements. Their sojourn on the Continent covered a space of something more than twelve months. It is but just to state, moreover, that they made the most of it. Carrying with them credentials of the best kind, and having an ample command of money, they found no difficulty in obtaining an introduction to the best society in all the capitals of Europe, amid the gaities of which Reginald gradually recovered both his health and his spirits, which were neither of them at any time wanting to his cousin. It is true that, from time to time, his thoughts reverted to the quiet manse of Loch Moideart, and to the happy days that he had spent there; and that the memory of these days invariably brought back a fit of despondency, which it was Cyril's especial busi-

ness to put to flight. But, as time ran on, even these attacks became less and less frequent, till, towards the close of the year, they had almost ceased to return. Meanwhile his father, in the course of the correspondence which was carried on between them, returned to the subject of Lady Julia,—a topic, in the enforcement of which he found his nephew a willingly; and though, at first, Reginald seemed as much averse to the arrangement as ever, even on that head his prejudices underwent a gradual change.

“Why should you persist in thwarting the governor, Reginald? Why not marry Lady Julia, and have done with it?” said Cyril.

“How can I, my dear fellow? Even if I had a heart to give, is my hand at my own disposal? That unhappy girl’s crimes do not absolve me from vows deliberately uttered,—at least, till I have acknowledged her before the world, and before the world repudiated her.”

“That is to say, you are willing to involve yourself and me and all your connexions in irretrievable disgrace and sorrow, rather than omit a matter of mere form, even while you yourself feel that it is no more than a form. I presume you scarcely intend to take to your bosom the cast-off mistress of Mr. Lorimer?”

than a week, indeed, was all that intervened between Reginald and the possession of Lady Julia's hand, when an accident befel that gave to the whole of his fortunes a revolution as complete as it was unexpected. He was proceeding through Covent-garden market towards Lincoln's-inn, when there passed him, outside the pillars of the Piazza, two individuals, of whose identity it was not till he had rubbed his eyes and examined them again that he became fully convinced. They were walking in the same direction with himself, and appeared so deeply immersed in conversation as to be insensible, to external objects. Now, he had been assured by Cyril only a few hours previously that Mr. Monro was still in Glasgow; and that aunt Mysie, as if ashamed of the part which her grandniece had played, was gone back to her seclusion in the Highlands. Yet, if ever the sense of sight spoke true, he had before him convincing proofs that they were both of them in London. Reginald's heart sank within him. He was utterly at a loss what to think; and though he quickened his pace so as to keep the objects of his curiosity in view, it was done rather instinctively than by design. Still, when he found himself amid a crowd of foot-passengers close upon the heels of this strange apparition, there arose within him an unaccountable

disposition to watch their movements, keeping himself unseen. They made for Drury lane, crossed it, and turned down by Queen-street. He followed, not however without taking the precaution to throw the folds of his cloak over the lower part of his face ; while, by keeping on the opposite side of the way, he contrived as much as possible to escape all risk of particular observation. In this manner he tracked them towards the covered passage which communicates between Queen-street and Lincoln's-inn-fields ; when, observing them to stop just under the archway, he made a bold push to learn something of the subject matter of their discourse.

Reginald walked quickly forward, and passed by the narrow footway to the right. The movement brought him close to the persons whom he had been following, and thoroughly satisfied him of their identity. Neither did it expose him to the slightest risk of detection : for though they both looked up for an instant, it was with the vacant stare of people whose minds are too much occupied with thoughts that bear upon themselves, to pay much heed to what may be going on around them. As may be imagined, the expression of deep and painful anxiety which their countenances displayed, rendered him only the more eager to discover its cause. The temptation to become

an eaves-dropper was irresistible. The situation of the place peculiarly favoured him; so he stopped, as soon as a pillar fairly screened him, and listened.

"It's nae use saying another word on that subject," aunt Mysie was pronouncing, "till ye tell me whats become o' the lassie hersel'. I hae nae authority to lat the document out o' my ain hands without her consent; and till I hae seen her, and gotten instructions frae her ain lips, neither threats nor fleeching sal wyle it frae me."

"Good God! what have I done?" replied Mr. Monro, "that I should have become an object of suspicion to you? Have I not assured you, on my honour, that I am ignorant of her place of abode,—that it is for the purpose of compelling him to do her justice that I require the certificate,—that, by throwing these impediments in my way, you are only protracting the poor girl's sufferings, and hindering me from fulfilling my engagements with yourself? If you had sent the document by post, as I desired, instead of taking this unnecessary journey in person, the whole affair might have been arranged long ago."

"Look ye, Maister Monro," was the answer, "it's lang since I gave up a thought o' the engagement wi' mysel' whereof ye are pleased

to mak mention. It's lang since I hae learned to regard the contracting thereanent as ane o' the maist daft-like actions o' my life; and, to be plain wi' you, it's lang since I hae seen through the mask o' hypocrisy with which ye were able at times to cover your baseness. Ever since ye lent yoursel' to the schemes o' that atrocious villain Ceeril, I hae seen through you; and naething but the consciousness of our want of power—twa freendless and unprotected females—to contend against the wealth and the influence of such a heartless generation, wad hae keepet me quiet. But I'm no' gain' to be bamboozled ony langer. I require ye to tell me where ye hae placed the girl, or I'll proclaim your villany to the first weel-dressed man I meet in the street, and see whether I canna get him to plead for me."

A dark and ironical smile passed over the features of Monro as he besought his companion to moderate her fury.

"If all that you insinuate were true, my dear Miss Macwhapple, only think how helpless—how perfectly helpless, is your situation! Here you are, an entire stranger in a great city, where people are all too much occupied with affairs of their own to pay the slightest regard to the tales of chance passengers. God help you! if you were to make your complaint to the Lord

Mayor in the middle of the street, he would treat you as a crazy person, and walk on. But your insinuations are quite groundless,—and you know that they are. If I interfered to make up matters between Cyril and your niece, I did so for the sake of Isabel;—nay, and you yourself admitted, at the time, that I had judged wisely. And as to the removal of the girl, was it not at her own desire, and with your full approbation?"

"No matter whether it was or was not. The fact that I maun be made acquainted with now is—where is she? Tell me that, or I'll find ways and means to compel you."

"Upon my honour I do not know; and, what is more, I never shall know; unless, by showing that certificate in the proper quarter, I am put in a situation to require the interference of the law in her favour."

"And what for should not I show the document mysel'?" demanded aunt Mysie.

"Because you are ignorant to whom it ought to be shown."

"And what for suld I be ignorant? why suld not you tak awa my ignorance?"

"Nay, that would be putting the affair entirely into your hands. Now, as I don't conceal from you that I have certain ends of my own to serve, I choose to play the first fiddle

in getting your niece's wrongs redressed. However, if you prefer that matters should continue as they are, I cannot help it."

"Base, bad man!—wha ever doubted that ye had ends o' your ain to serve? But things shall not rest as they are. The document shall be produced; and ye may be the aine to produce it: but it shall be done in my presence."

"Oh, I don't object to that. Pray give it me, then: and when I have arranged matters as to the most convenient time and place for using it, you shall be informed."

"Do ye tak me for a simpleton atgether?" demanded aunt Mysie. "What! give you up the certificate, and trust to your assurances for what sal follow? I am no' sic a fool as that comes to, neither!"

"Well, then, come with me now: or, stay—I had better go and put things in a train; and to-morrow, or to-night if you like it better, we can go together and make use of the deed."

"The sooner the better," replied aunt Mysie. "The puir lassie has been ovr lang out o' sight and out o' hearing already; it sal na be my faut if she be keepet sae beyond to-morrow. I'se be ready to accompany ye on this errand at ony hour ye choose to name."

"Well, then, suppose we say nine to-night?"

"With a' my heart. But where are we to meet? Will ye ca' for me?"

"No, I think not. You can find your way thus far, I dare say. It's no great distance from your lodging; just through Turn-stile passage, and across the square."

"I'll no' fail you, depend upon it."

As she uttered these words, aunt Mysie fell off from her companion, without, however, condescending by voice or motion to say God speed. On the contrary, she walked abruptly away through Lincoln's-inn-fields; while Monro, retracing his steps along Queen-street, left Reginald mute and motionless as a statue in the spot where he had ensconced himself.

CHAPTER XII.

CONTRETEMPS.

THE effect produced upon Reginald's mind by the conversation to which he had been an ear-witness was of such a nature as, in after years, to astonish himself. There broke in upon him all at once a light of which the brilliancy was never for a moment obscured. He received an impression that the foulest play had been used in reference both to Isabel and himself, and that those on whom he bestowed his confidence had betrayed it. A thousand circumstances, disregarded at the moment, now rose into his memory, every one of which served as a link by which to connect one event with another. Yet there was a mystery which he could not penetrate—a problem which he could not solve;—namely, why so much pains should have been taken to involve in utter misery persons who had never wronged the persecutors. Was Cyril also implicated?—nay, was he not a chief mover in the plot?

"I cannot answer these questions!" exclaimed he aloud, "I am utterly confounded. Yet I have great cause to thank Providence, which has brought me, by means so mysterious, to a knowledge of circumstances which, if they be judiciously followed up, will doubtless throw light upon the whole intrigue. How shall I act?"

Reginald, having pondered for a moment, came to the judicious conclusion that the present was an affair which could not be rightly dealt with except through the instrumentality of the police. He trusted, moreover, that he should find the magistrate disposed to act with the secrecy, as well as promptitude, which the case seemed to require: and he was not mistaken. A private conference was freely granted to him; in which, after stating his name and rank, he received a ready assurance of all the aid which it might be in the power of the establishment to afford. "But," continued his worship, "I don't exactly see what it is that you apprehend. Is the woman's life or liberty in danger?—or have you cause to suspect him of any design against yourself?"

"I scarcely know to what my misgiving amounts," replied Reginald: "but if you could allow a trusty officer to attend with me at the place of meeting, and direct him to act, as far as

may be lawful, under my instructions, matters may be brought to light affecting the happiness, perhaps the life, of more than one person."

To this the magistrate, after a slight demur, assented; and Reginald, having seen the officer, and directed him when and where to meet him, returned home. He shut himself up, however, in his own room, being desirous, if possible, to avoid all intercourse with the rest of the family. But he was thwarted in that design: Cyril, it appeared, had inquired for him, and he could not refuse to see him.

"It will be satisfactory to you to know, Reginald," said he, having first cautiously shut the door, "that, by a letter which I received this morning from Monro, all doubt as to the fate of Isabel is removed. She is married—actually married to Mr. Lorimer, who has gone upon half-pay, and is now living with his false wife at Stonehaven, on the east coast of Scotland."

"Is Monro's letter of recent date?" asked Reginald carelessly.

"Written three days ago, as you may perceive," replied Cyril, handing him the letter.

Reginald looked at it, recognised the hand, saw that it bore date as usual, and returned it.

"This is explicit enough," said he. "If there had been room to doubt before, this

would have removed it. Has Monro ever been in London since we parted?"

"Not that I am aware of," replied Cyril; "and if he had, I think that I should have heard of it."

"And old aunt Mysie,—what can have become of her?"

"He has taken no notice of her in his recent communications. The last news he gave was, you may recollect, that she had returned, in mere shame, into the remote Highlands."

"Well, I suppose we shall soon cease to think or speak about these people at all: for my part, I am heartily tired of the subject."

Cyril looked at his cousin with an inquiring stare; for both the style and manner of his conversation were so entirely different from what they used to be, as to excite in him for the moment something more than idle curiosity. He could not, however, detect in the guarded expression of Reginald's countenance any other traces than those which weariness is apt to leave behind. He therefore concluded that his victim had become thoroughly deadened to remorse, and of course prepared to leap, without misgiving, into the snare that had been laid for him. He was too much of a politician, however, to rake up even the embers of expiring passion; so he changed the conversation,

by asking whether Reginald meant to dine at home.

"No," was the reply; "I dine abroad."

"With the Templetowns?"

"No."

"Well, well, my dear fellow, I have no wish to pry into your secrets; only remember that you are close upon your wedding-day. Lady Julia——"

"Will sustain no injury at my hands.—But I detain you from more agreeable occupations, and I wish to be alone."

Cyril instantly withdrew; and Reginald fancied that he observed as he went a flush of anger or chagrin, or some other uneasy passion, redden his cheek. Neither had he deceived himself. Cyril was uneasy,—so uneasy that he made up his mind to keep his cousin unremittingly in sight till the marriage ceremony should have been performed. For the guilty are always suspicious: the traitor is always apprehensive that, by some chance or another, his designs have been fathomed; and Cyril, though he could not discover the slightest ground of just alarm, feared that Reginald was at last beginning to suspect him. Why should he affect reserve on the subject of his proceedings that evening? And with what view were the questions put relative to Monro

and aunt Mysie? Was it possible? No, no, he was sure it was not. Still, it might be prudent to observe him narrowly; and he was determined not to lose sight of him. It appeared, however, that for once Cyril was not to be the master of his own devices. His uncle had business to transact in the city, which, requiring the signature of a witness, rendered it necessary that Cyril should accompany him; and ere they returned, it was time to dress for dinner. All, therefore, that remained for Cyril to do, was to give every possible encouragement to the conviction that his plans were too deeply laid and too well arranged to sustain at the hands of his cousin either detection or interruption.

Meanwhile Reginald, the prey alternately of hope and of fear,—of hope he knew not to what end pointing, of fear he could tell in what issue likely to terminate,—was counting the slow progress of the hours and minutes as they crept along. Never had their passage appeared so tardy before; and never, not even in midsummer, was daylight so slow in taking its departure. At last, however, the increasing darkness warned him that his period of suspense was drawing to a close. He opened a drawer, took from it a brace of pocket-pistols,

loaded them with ball, and thrust them into his bosom. This done, he threw his cloak round him, and walked abroad; but as the hands of the hall-clock pointed only to half-past five, leaving three hours and a half to the time of the converse, he determined to spend these hours in some coffee-room not far from the scene of action. With this view he proceeded to Green's; took his place in one of the most retired boxes, and ordered dinner. But it was not yet placed before him, when, happening to cast his eyes through a crevice in the curtain which separated his cell from the rest of the apartment, he saw the door open, and Cyril and Monro enter. They made towards the fireplace, at the farther extremity of which Reginald was sitting. What a situation was his at that moment! Should they observe him, then adieu to every chance of effecting, either now or hereafter, the discovery to which he looked forward: should they fail to notice him, then more might come of it. Reginald strove, not unsuccessfully, to stifle his own emotion, while, drawing himself gently along the bench, he planted himself in such an attitude that, being screened by the corner, he came almost in close contact with the intruders, by neither of whom was his

proximity in danger of being detected, unless they raised the curtain, or came into the same box. I need not add that he was all ear.

"On that head you alarm yourself very needlessly," said Monro in a half whisper. "It is quite impossible that he should harbour any suspicion. What, indeed, could he suspect? But I own that I have more serious apprehensions with respect to her."

"She might have been dangerous a week ago," was the reply; "but matters are, I trust, in the best train for drawing her sting also. You don't suppose he can have seen you by any chance about the streets?"

"I have no more apprehension of that than I have of the failure of my own arrangements. Not once have I ventured into any of the leading streets, nor is it my purpose to do so till the marriage is over: and then, you know, I can get tired of Glasgow, and remove southward."

"Why, then, should he have asked that question?"

"*'Trifles light as air,'* my dear friend, *'are to the jealous mind—'* you know the rest. Was there anything unnatural in the question?"

"Perhaps not. But coming at such a moment, and being put with so peculiar an em-

phasis—Ah, you may smile as you please, but I am not satisfied."

"Really, Cyril, I did not think you had been so timid. What, man! hast forgot the old saying, 'Faint heart never won fair lady?'"

"And whither do you mean to convey the old one?"

"To the same place where the young one is bestowed: she could not be in safer or better hands."

"But won't there be a great risk in this? What if they were to meet?"

"They have no more chance of meeting there than if wide seas rolled between them. Leave all that to me."

"I believe I must—I know that I may; that is, unless good luck have deserted us at the very moment when of all others it is least her part to play false. Yet I find he is gone out, and that he has left no message as to the probable time of his return."

"What can that signify to us, Cyril? Upon my honour, it makes me sick to see all this foolish and unnecessary fidgeting. Can't the man have private engagements of his own as well as his neighbours?"

"So I should say if he were at all given to these things; but he is not."

set before him with hearty good-will. He ate voraciously, drank his wine freely, read the newspaper, and conducted himself in every other respect as those are apt to do whose minds and circumstances are both easy; while the man against whose peace and honour he had long plotted was sending viands away almost untouched, and vainly striving to become reconciled to a state of suspense which could not now be prolonged beyond a definite period.

Thus wore the night; the rival actors in this strange by-play occupying the same stage, yet holding with one another no communication. At length Monro, after casting his eye towards the clock, called for his bill. It was delivered, minutely scrutinised, found fault with as exorbitant, and discharged. A brief pause ensued, during which he continued to read the newspaper, as if finishing some article which he had begun, and then raised his eye again towards the timepiece as it struck the half-hour after eight. As it tolled out, he rose, put on his great-coat, and quitted the coffee-room. "Now, then," thought Reginald to himself, "I may breathe freely." But he was still a great deal too anxious to act upon his own suggestion; so he too paid his bill and wrapped up. He sallied forth; hurried towards Lincoln's-inn-

ed by the female as they passed her by, sufficed to assure him that the true game was afoot. He was therefore strongly tempted to slacken his pace, and might perhaps have done so, had not his companion, by a pressure of the hand, urged him forward. On therefore they went, passing a hackney-coach, which stood with the horses' heads facing Drury-lane, till they came in sight of a cab about a stone's-throw farther onward, which the driver was immediately instructed to face above in the same direction. The movement was yet in progress, when, looking back, they observed by the light of a lamp two figures issue from beneath the archway; —they moved towards the coach, they entered, and the door was shut on them.

"Do you see that coach, Bill?" said the officer to the cabman.

"Yes, sir."

"I will give you a sovereign to keep it in view. Wherever it goes, you go; wherever it stops, you stop; and on no account lose sight of it."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the fellow, drawing on one side, partly to permit his own fare to mount, partly to make room for the coach to pass him. "I'll be arter him 'spose he drive to h—!" Nor did he boast of that which he was unable to perform. The coach crossed Drury-

lane through a line of vehicles; the cab kept close behind it. The coach traversed Covent-garden; bore away, by Henrietta-street and Chandos-street, towards St. Martin's-lane: still the cab was in its wake; and neither did the impediments presented by a pressure of carriages at Charing-cross, nor an unusual bustle in the Haymarket, separate the one from the other for an instant. And so it was throughout the whole extent of Piccadilly, till Hyde-park-corner was left behind, and the two machines, like a fugitive and pursuer, swept along Sloane-street into the King's-road.

"Where the devil can they be going?" whispered the officer: "they have brought us all the way to Chelsea."

"No matter," replied Reginald: "if they go to the world's end, we'll follow."

And they did follow; passing the Military Asylum, leaving the Royal Hospital to the left, and eventually behind them. At last, however, when it appeared to Reginald that they would soon be beyond the utmost outskirts of London, the coach pulled up. It stopped in front of an iron railing, within which seemed to be a sort of shrubbery, at the further extremity of which was a house, apparently of moderate dimensions.

"We must give them the go-by here," whis-

“Oh, spare me! spare me!” exclaimed a voice every tone of which sank into the heart of him that heard it. “Indeed, indeed I have been quiet: I have not uttered one sigh—I have not spoken one word since you left me. Have mercy to-night, and I will never complain again, do with me what you will.”

“Monster! what means this!” cried Reginald as, snatching the candle from the keeper’s hand, he sprang across the threshold. That bound carried him into a cell about eight feet in length by four and a half in breadth. There was no fireplace, nor any window except a grated skylight of a single pane. The furniture consisted simply of a truckle bedstead, on which, beneath a tattered coverlet, lay a female form, so wasted by sickness, so worn down by misery, that, had she not spoken, by Reginald she never could have been recognised. Nor, as he panted to draw breath in that close and fœtid atmosphere, did he experience the slightest surprise at the havoc which confinement had made in her. He smote his hand against his head, and staggering towards the wall, leaned on it for several moments ere he found strength or resolution to approach the bed.

“Oh, this is cruel! this is wanton cruelty!” cried the wretched creature, burying her head under the bed-clothes. “If I had raised my

voice beyond a whisper, I could have understood it; but to beat me to-night——”

“Brute! beast! miscreant!” shrieked Reginald, seizing the keeper by the throat and presenting a pistol at his head; “hast thou dared——”

“My God! what voice is that?” cried the prisoner, casting the coverlet from her, and making an effort to rise. “Reginald! Reginald! is it thou? thou thyself? Oh, come to me, come to me! do not mock me, as thou hast so often done in dreams! Speak, speak to me! speak again—let me hear that voice and die in listening to it.”

In a moment Reginald was recalled to his self-command. He threw the keeper from him, and hastily replacing the weapon in his bosom, rushed to the bedside.

“I am here, Isabel—mine own Isabel! It is Reginald—it is I myself, come to set thee free and——”

But he never finished the sentence. Joy, surprise, the sudden revulsion from despair to hope, had proved too much for her feeble frame. She could not meet his embrace, but fell back on the paliasse in a faint.

“Beast!” cried Reginald to the keeper, “as you hope for mercy, bring help. What!” continued he, as he strove to lift her from her

wretched pallet, "chained down too ! Gracious heavens ! was ever barbarity like this ?"

He turned as he spoke, and so fiercely were his passions roused, that, had the keeper been near, the probability is that his life would have paid the forfeit. Happily for himself, however, in the mean time, and eventually for Reginald, he had obeyed the first command of his visiter, and was already among his domestics several of whom he despatched with proper cordials, and all other things necessary to the assistance of the invalid. When they rushed into the cell, Reginald, who had again grasped a pistol, sought eagerly for the man who had been his first guide. Not finding him, however, reason gradually returned, and he besought the attendants to deliver the poor victim from the fetters which, for whatever space of time they might have encircled her ankles, and the swollen state of the limbs gave proof that it was considerable, must have hindered her all the while from lying except in one position. Nor was there any occasion to employ threats for the purpose of rendering these persons tractable. They vied with one another in the display of every humane feeling : they unlocked the padlocks—they threw over the patient some articles of decent clothing—they poured ether down her throat, and eau-de-Co

logne on her forehead and, hands ; and, above all, they raised her from her pallet and carried her out to a room where the atmosphere was purer. The effect of the latter change was immediately seen : she opened her eyes, drew a long breath, and raised herself on her elbow.

“ Was it a dream ? ” cried she : “ was it but a dream, after all ? ”

“ Dear, dear Bell ! ” exclaimed aunt Mysie, who, restrained partly by fear, partly by astonishment, had hitherto kept aloof, but who now ran forward and folded her niece in her arms,—“ Oh, what a sight is this ! ”

“ And you too, dear aunt ! ” replied Isabel, embracing her. “ But where is Reginald ? Was he not here an instant ago ? Did I not see him,—did I not hear him speak ? ”

“ You did, you did ! ” cried Reginald, unable any longer to restrain his impatience. A wild cry burst from her lips ; she threw herself into his embrace, and for several moments there passed between them only the silent eloquence of deep and absorbing ecstasy.

To remove Isabel from the madhouse to a comfortable lodging, which Townsend, a man of extensive and ready knowledge, was in a condition to recommend, and to carry with them Monro as a prisoner, were acts which it required less than an hour to accomplish. How

a written statement, and caused him to sign it in the presence of the medical man and Townsend, he permitted him to go at large.

"You have behaved with extraordinary clemency," said *Monro*, as he took up his hat to depart; "and to convince you that I am not indifferent to your kindness, I will enlighten you on another subject. Do you remember *Emma Freeman*?"

"Perfectly," replied *Reginald*: "she was imprudent, and died early."

"To be sure she did. And on whom, think you, rests the odium of her sin and death?"

"I never heard," answered *Reginald*.

"Why, then, I will tell you. Upon you! *Cyril* did the deed, and contrived to satisfy your father and others that you were guilty."

"The cold-blooded and unprincipled scoundrel! But will you swear to that?"

"Ay, and will add it freely to this confession."

As he said this, he seized his pen, and one sentence more, full of dark import, was appended to the document. But though *Reginald* experienced no ordinary satisfaction at being thus put in possession of evidence sufficient to set himself and his wife clear with the world, his abhorrence of *Monro*, as a partner in so foul a transaction, would not permit his holding with him any further communication;

wanted in the drawing-room. But Mr. Cyril did not come. The servants sought him in his own apartment,—he was not there. They looked through all the rooms in the house, but he was nowhere to be found. At last, the porter being consulted, gave intimation that he had quitted home early in the morning, carrying with him as much baggage as if he were going to travel into some distant country. Of course, no one could doubt as to the causes of a flight to which shame, and perhaps the dread of punishment, must have impelled him; and so thoroughly was the indignation even of Sir Charles excited, that no human being thought for one moment of making any further inquiry respecting him.

And now came all those unravellings and explanations, of which, as I am not writing the history of the house of Trevenean, it will be sufficient for my present purpose if I give merely the outline. It appeared that Sir Charles had been industriously taught, both by Cyril and Monro, to look upon his son as a profligate in principle, and a low debauchee in his habits. Besides the ruin and early death of Emma Freeman, numerous peccadilloes, of which he knew nothing, had been charged upon him. While in Scotland, his career was represented as a tissue of follies and vices. Large

modest woman, would have been an insult,—as offered to your wife were hideous. I rejected them with scorn: I appealed to Mr. Monro; I found him only half disposed to protect me, and I became desperate. The ruffian, seeing this, endeavoured to soothe; and I pretended to be reconciled. He quitted me, and I wrote to you a full detail of all that had happened. I did not, as I had been accustomed to do, put it under cover to Cyril, but sent it direct: yet I never got an answer. Then, indeed, I began to fear that you had deserted me; and when week after week rolled on, and still no letter came, fear grew into conviction.

“As yet we had never experienced the slightest pressure in pecuniary matters. To be sure, my heart rebelled against accepting a maintenance from one whom I believed faithless; but what could I do? I was without any other means of support, and I took the allowance which Mr. Monro made me. But he departed at last; and having neglected to establish any agent in Glasgow, the horrors of poverty were added to the rest of my misfortunes. This might be about ten months ago. I wrote to Mr. Monro, informing him of my condition; and I received an answer, intimating that if I would come to London, he would be able to do for me much

permitted to breathe the air of Heaven. But it is all over now; I am thine once more, either for life or death, and the past shall be as a dream."

Such was Isabel's story—that of aunt Mysie was in its spirit not dissimilar. She was not slow, after their removal into the Low Country, of discovering the worthlessness of Monro's professions. He treated her at times scarce with common civility; and though she bore with it on Isabel's account, and even affected not to see, suspicions were excited in her mind which never wholly left her. At last, Isabel herself disappeared: yet, as she left a note behind, requesting that no stir might be made, things being in progress towards a consummation which would doubtless prove satisfactory to all, aunt Mysie held her peace. Moreover, she had no reason to complain for several months afterwards that she was forgotten. Monro wrote frequently, supplied her with money, and gave very flattering accounts of her niece's situation, which was, he said, as comfortable as that of a young woman could be, compelled to wait the decision of a tedious law-suit, and to maintain a struggle with the proudest and most relentless of English families. At last, however, a direct application was made for the certificate of marriage, which was all, as the applicant stated

It is scarcely necessary to add, that when all these facts came to be detailed to Sir Charles and Lady Trevenean, they excited in both the most lively interest for their son's young and innocent wife. Not a moment was lost in communicating to Lord Templetown the substance of the discoveries that had been effected. Both he and his fair daughter spoke of themselves as extremely ill used—of the Treveneans as a base and low-minded race; but they saw there was no help for it. His lordship lost his command over the county; Lady Julia found another husband; and Reginald, having nursed Isabel in town till her health was fully restored, carried her in triumph to Morley. There, in a neat cottage on the outskirts of the park, they took up their abode; while aunt Mysie was sent back to Scotland at her own desire, with such a pension as rendered her a welcome guest in many a mansion which had once been shut against her.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST ACT OF ALL.

THE reader will have probably anticipated that it was not left for Sir Charles Trevenean, or his son, or his domestics, to make Cyril aware of the extraordinary occurrences which had recently taken place in the family. It might be about two o'clock in the morning consequent upon Isabel's discovery, that he found, on returning home from a rout, a letter lying upon his table. He broke the seal without having looked at the superscription, and read, with what feelings a person differently circumstanced might find it a hard matter to conceive, the following abrupt sentences :—

“ DEAR CYRIL,

“ We are all blown up ! You were perfectly correct in your suspicions—the fool had wit enough to open his eyes, and fortune favoured him,—I have been nabbed in the very act. They have got possession of my writing-

desk, with all your letters. Isabel is at large ! In a word, we are done for. I am off to Paris : if you are disposed to follow, you will find me at the Hotel de Londres, in Rue St. Hilaire.

“ Yours ever,

“ D. MONRO.”

Cyril read and re-read this abrupt billet in a state of mind which beggars all description. Not that there entered into his emotions the faintest tincture of remorse for the many crimes which he had committed, and the many more which he had intended to commit : but the consciousness that all were exposed beyond the remotest chance of evasion—the conviction that he was himself caught in the snare which he had set for another,—this it was, and this almost alone, that wrung his heart as if an iron vice had clasped it. Nor did it fail to add to his distress, when he recollected that he had never had the wisdom, usually possessed by persons of his stamp, to make hay while the sun shone. No store had been accumulated by him out of all that his uncle had permitted to pass through his hands : on the contrary, except a trifling sum, the chance residue of his common allowance, he possessed at the moment no resource against absolute destitution ; and his conscience assured him that for further

being lost to all sense of honour, and decency, and self-respect, struggled, by fair means or by foul, to keep up what are called appearances. Such, however, was the career of Cyril Trevenean during a sojourn of six years in Paris, throughout the whole of which he lived, according to the worst meaning of the expression, by his wits; making a prey of all over whom he contrived to establish an ascendancy,—namely, the thoughtless, the young, the sanguine, and the unguarded. Among other arrangements, he managed to introduce himself into the confidence of a house of extensive mercantile credit, of which, for obvious reasons, I am not authorised to give the name, but which carried on, under very peculiar circumstances, a large trade with London. Neither am I called upon to relate in full how the connexion began. The frequenters of ——— and ——— will doubtless understand that it is not very difficult in the atmosphere of either den of vice to acquire habits which grow into a second nature; and that strange intimacies are from time to time formed under the pressure of troubles, the inevitable results of such habits. Enough, therefore, is done, when I state that at one of these places of public resort Cyril contrived to make a gentleman so much his debtor, that, to deliver himself from an immediate difficulty, he

gave his confidence to a comparative stranger. From that hour Cyril became a prime agent in all the communications that passed between the opulent firm of —— and —— in Paris, and the not less opulent house of —— and Sons in London. He travelled from one capital to the other, under various assumed names; negotiated bills of exchange, when such were needed; made out invoices, superintended the lading of vessels, and otherwise became a free trader on the most extensive scale. Yet he acted here, as he had done everywhere, with the most consummate selfishness. Monro, his ancient confederate in crime, was thrown overboard, and the intimacy of a whole lifetime was dissolved like the acquaintance of an hour.

Somehow or other, it almost always happens that men who live in the habitual violation of the laws are zealous advocates for the reform of abuses in the institutions of their country. I do not mean to insinuate that there are no patriots except among the ruined in fortune, in character, or in both: but that persons so circumstanced seldom enrol themselves on the side of established usages and legitimate authority, the experience of all ages and all countries has shown. There was, therefore, nothing extraordinary in the fact, that the chief partners in the two establishments with

which Cyril Trevenean was connected should have advocated, both in England and in France, liberal principles. Now, if Cyril had any bias at all, it was in favour of opinions the reverse of liberal. He had been taught, both in the Vicarage and at Morley Park, to account the British constitution, as it was settled in 1688, the most perfect system of polity the world had ever seen; and, as a necessary consequence, to approve or condemn the governments of other nations according to the degree of resemblance which they bore to that of his own. Of course, the downfall of Napoleon and the re-establishment of the Bourbons could not fail of being esteemed by him as events in the highest degree beneficial. Nor had the survey which he was enabled to take of the internal state of France, while, with his cousin, he traversed it from north to south, tended in any degree to deliver him from his prejudices. He saw fields in the highest state of cultivation, harbours crowded with shipping, manufactories in full employ, and a people generally contented. No wonder that he should have returned home fully impressed with a belief that, as France was happy and prosperous under the paternal sway of her sovereign, a change of government could be desired only by bad men for their own bad pur-

poses. When he visited Paris again, an outcast and an exile, his ideas underwent a remarkable change. He became convinced, by the reasonings of those with whom he associated, that "there was something rotten in the state of Denmark;" and that till king and priest were alike shaken aside, there could be no real happiness for the people. He was therefore forward to enrol his name among the list of patriots who had already matured, not exactly the revolution of July 1830, but one out of which the popular interests were expected to derive much more decided advantages.

It was not judged possible to excite, even in France, a movement sufficiently extensive, so long as men's minds were free from the dread of personal suffering. In Paris, the conductors of newspapers were indeed forward to inveigh against encroachments upon the liberty of the press; a cry which the deputies, over whom the press exercised an extraordinary influence, very readily took up. But in the provinces all was quiet; and it was determined to disturb that quiet. How far Cyril lent himself to these views of his party has never been fully ascertained. All that his own disjointed journal records amounts to this,—that he set out in disguise for Normandy, and that soon after his arrival the torch of the incen-

diary was busy from one extremity of the department to another. Night after night, fires burst forth,—by what hands kindled no one could discover,—which not only consumed the collected produce of the earth, but kept the minds of the people in the most painful state of excitement. A cry was raised, that the government, though strong to oppress, was too feeble to protect its subjects from outrage; and that the paid mercenaries that threatened the liberties of the Parisians were useless to defend the lives and property of the unoffending provincials. I do not know how far the opinions of a man in Cyril Trevenan's peculiar situation deserve respect; but he attributed no trifling share of the unpopularity which thickened round the head of the ill-fated Charles to the operations of the incendiary in Normandy.

From day to day, and from hour to hour, the conspiracy to dethrone the Bourbons gathered strength. The final explosion was indeed, in some sort, needful; yet, if any credit be due to the assertions of a felon, the Three Days of July were but the anticipation of events long and deliberately matured. In the operations of that stirring period, both as a combatant and a counsellor, Cyril played his part. But it was on another stage that the friends of

liberty expected at his hands the most important services. He passed over to England; carried with him introductions to various patriots there, and served for a time as a channel of communication between them and their allies in Paris. Meanwhile the more lucrative and scarcely less perilous occupation of a smuggler was not laid aside. With the machinery employed in carrying it forward he had long been familiar, and now having a twofold object in view, he did not scruple to become to a certain degree the superintendent of its movements. Hence his settlement, as James Marshall, in the grocer's shop at Waltham, with all the consequences arising out of it,—fatal alike to the public peace of the parish, and the private happiness of many of its inhabitants, of which a sufficiently detailed account has been given in a previous portion of these Chronicles.

It has been elsewhere hinted, that to one passion in particular Cyril was so much the slave, that no consideration of consequences to himself or others ever interfered to put a curb upon its indulgence. His behaviour to the wife of one of his Parisian employers had been as base as his treatment of Charlotte Amos; for which the phlegmatic temperament of the injured husband, and the manners of the country, saved him from reaping summary punishment.

into his old position by a threat of betraying all. His astonishment may be guessed at, when he discovered that the birds were flown, and the nest cold. The truth was, that Messrs. ——— and ———, apprehending some such catastrophe, had provided the best defence against it, by winding up their affairs during his rustication, and withdrawing to a new scene of action. Thus, then, after years of vicious labour, Cyril found himself deserted even by his partners in crime; for the very Parisians took care, in reply to the first application which he made, to assure him that they looked upon their connexion with so determined a profligate as ended.

Cyril's downfall from comparative wealth to absolute poverty was as rapid as that of the wildest speculator could be. It is but fair to add, that his courage did not fall with his circumstances. He saw, indeed, that he must be content to move in a humbler sphere; but he still trusted to move effectively. During his sojourn at Birmingham he had ingratiated himself into the good will of his landlady's daughter. He made up his mind to return to her; and, if the worst befel, to make her his wife, for the sake of the few hundred pounds of which her mother took care to say that she was possessed. As his appearance, while Mrs. Brown's lodger,

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ped. Immediately a young man came towards him.

"I say, you—what's your name,—you be wanted in that ere van. Mother Blowhard's ta'en a fancy to ye. I was the favourite last week; mayhap your reign may be a thought longer."

Cyril was amused, and accepted the invitation, not, as may be supposed, from any predilection for the suitor, but because, being totally destitute, he did not know how to better his condition elsewhere. The ogress, however, was not to be put off with bare civility; she appeared to dote upon her new lover, and would not permit him to be absent from her sight a moment. In this species of horrid thralldom he continued several weeks, visiting, among other places, Birmingham, where one of the first persons to present herself in the giantess's apartment was his wife. Of course, a scene occurred in some respects similar to that in which Charlotte played a part at Sittingbourne, though the results in the two cases were different. Cyril was glad to avail himself of Mother Blowhard's assistance in escaping from one whose right to detain him could not be disputed; and being smuggled out of the town, was taken up again in Daventry, the she-ogre having furnished him with means

The success which attended his first operations was surprising.

Cyril had already begun to excite the envy of his confederates, and, as a matter of course, to be known to the police, when he discovered Charlotte in Covent-garden theatre. He would have regretted the rencontre, had not the woman who was his companion seen and admired the girl, and pronounced her just the sort of person for whom she had been commissioned to look out as housekeeper to an old friend of her own. Now, as Cyril cared not what became of his victim so long as she ceased to be a trouble to himself, he readily gave in to the scheme; stipulating, as may be imagined, for an adequate compensation in the mean time, and calculating on much more extensive profits by-and-by. How the negotiation ended the reader is already aware. But the idea of using her as a tool having once entered into the miscreant's mind, he was not willing to relinquish it. He consulted his associates; received and rejected many different proposals, and might have failed at last but for an accident. One of the gang brought in, on a certain evening, a reticule which he had stolen from the arm of a young woman as she was alighting from a stage-coach in the yard of the Bull-and-Mouth.

It contained, among other things, a letter of recommendation to the Countess of Beddington, which in an instant was turned to use. The character of the countess was soon discovered, Charlotte was persuaded to personate the new lady's-maid, and the jewels were stolen.

And now comes the last scene in the career of this abandoned profligate, which proved to be, in some respects, more remarkable than any that had preceded it. The amount of the prize operating strongly on his cupidity, Cyril determined to keep the whole to himself, and therefore pretended to his confederates, whom he met in the evening, that the plan had entirely failed. It appeared, however, either that his manner had betrayed him, or that, judging of him by themselves, they distrusted the statement on its own ground; for while one set himself to watch the Countess of Beddington's door, another kept Cyril constantly in view. He was traced to a coach-office, and found to have booked himself all the way to Paris. Of course, suspicion was strengthened; and it received on the following day ample confirmation. What followed has probably been anticipated. Though the fugitive, by getting a start of eighteen hours, contrived to throw the officers for some time off the scent, the infor-

mation given at the Home Office was so circumstantial, that an application to the French authorities was promptly made, and as promptly answered. The police of Paris did its duty; and Cyril, after a search of a few days, was taken.

The jewels having been found in his possession, or traced to pawnbrokers, Cyril did not entertain the slightest hope that he would be able to evade justice. He knew, however, that the fashion of hanging for such crimes was obsolete; and an active imagination was busy in devising schemes for the future guidance of his proceedings in New South Wales, when an incident befel which cast a dark shadow even over these day-dreams. The steam-boat that conveyed him from Calais entered Dover harbour just as a man-of-war's boat was landing her crew; one of whom no sooner turned his face towards the deck of the packet, than he recognised the prisoner, and was by him recognised in turn.

"That is the incendiary!" cried he: "that is James Marshall!"

"What! Jones," observed the officer, "have we got James Marshall in hand?"

Cyril groaned, for he saw in this fresh accuser no other than Dick Solley, whom he had succeeded in drawing to the very edge of a

precipice, but had failed in casting down headlong. The facts of the case were these:—Solley had embarked, by virtue of his sentence, for Botany Bay. He had discovered and disclosed to the officer commanding the troops a projected mutiny among the convicts. He had carried arms in support of the commandant during the whole voyage, and was rewarded at its termination with a free pardon from the governor. But, ashamed to return home, he had volunteered on board the Pelican gun-brig; and to the first lieutenant, from whom he received great kindness, he made a full confession of all that he knew in reference to the disturbances in Kent. As chance would have it, moreover,—or rather, in the order of that Providence which sooner or later calls the wicked to account,—the Pelican was at anchor opposite Dover when the Calais packet arrived; and Solley, noticing his tempter as he was preparing to land, gave utterance to the exclamation just given. It was on his part involuntary; but its effect on the fortunes of Cyril proved decisive. He was tried for the capital offence. It came out in evidence that he had employed the utmost art to make Solley the actual perpetrator of the crime; that he so far prevailed as to lead him to the side of the barn, and to put a steel and tinder-box in his hands; but that then Dick's

heart failed, or his better principles asserted the dominion, and he refused to strike a light. "Well, d—me!" cried Cyril, "it shall not be said that there was no fire in Waltham." As he uttered this, he himself struck a light; and, before Solley could stay his hand, flung through a crevice in the wall a blazing match into a heap of straw.

On such evidence James Marshall, *alias* Bill Jones, *alias* Cyril Trevenean, was found guilty. He made ready for the fate which awaited him in the manner already detailed, and died the death of a malefactor, almost at the same moment that the ill-fated victim of his baseness rendered up her soul to Him who gave it.





THE RIVAL SYSTEMS.



THE RIVAL SYSTEMS.

CHAPTER I.

PARISH POLITICS.

I RETURN now to the village of Waltham, in which, as has been described in a previous volume, the vestry had determined to establish a manufactory on a scale somewhat more extensive than that to which the people had been hitherto accustomed. A steady opposition had been offered to the scheme by two classes of persons. Giles Solley, and the few that thought with him, objected to it on the ground that the habits of the paupers were not those of artisans; that the loom was not thriving elsewhere; that to hope for success, bringing, as they must do, the produce of unskilful hands into competition with that of practised weavers, was idle; and that, were the contrary the case, it was not in itself a desirable thing to render the place a seat of manufactures. "Supposing," continued Giles, "that the

not enter among us. I
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themselves. The
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—and services, of which
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Neither was Gile:
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was not yet cured

little gentlemen as servants; they would not therefore listen to his proposal for a moment.

Next came the suggestion of Mr. Salvage, the retired fabricator of cottons. His views stopped not short of the immediate commencement of a second Manchester, and he advocated their adoption with all the enthusiasm which the recollections of his own youthful career were calculated to inspire. But he, too, failed to carry conviction to the minds of his hearers. The project was on too large a scale; they were without funds to accomplish it—they doubted its wisdom in the abstract. Finally, they came to the sort of determination at which men anxious to do something, yet afraid of doing too much, are accustomed to arrive. They agreed to adopt a middle course, and were warned by both parties, upon whose advice they refused to act, that what they were about to do was worse than doing nothing.

Though Giles Solley had protested against this device, he was too good a citizen to refuse whatever assistance it might be in his power to afford in order to render it effective. As a private individual, he resolved indeed to give the land-allotment system a trial; and for that purpose made choice of two men, both of them industrious in their habits and the fathers of large families. To each he portioned off an

their own; and I am much deceived if your best men would not be of the number."

"And how are we to get our work done, supposing all the people were to close with your offer?"

"Well, then," replied Giles smiling, "even in this extreme case I will show you. We complain that the parish is too populous,—that there are more labourers than we can employ,—that we are obliged to keep one-third as good as idle. According to this statement, we require no more than two-thirds to cultivate our farms. What difference, in point of labour, can it make to us, whether we employ two-thirds of the people constantly, or employ all, giving to each only two-thirds of full employ?"

"Ah! but we must, upon your plan, relinquish a portion of our land."

"Be it so: and what then? We say the land does not repay the cost of cultivation; and burthened as it is now by one useless hand in every three, the case may be so. But shall we be losers if, in parting with a few acres from each of our farms, we get rid at the same time of a large body of superfluous dependents?"

"I cannot think that the poor man would ever make the thing answer."

“Why not? Let him crop his land as he pleases, and it will furnish him with wheat enough to supply his family with bread throughout the year. He will raise vegetables sufficient not only to supply the wants of his table, but to keep a pig; and the produce of his four days’ work, with all that his children may earn,—his harvesting, hopping, and so forth,—all this will be disposable for clothing, fuel, candles, and rent. What occasion will that man have to come upon the parish at all, unless his own health or his wife’s break down? and if I keep a family of eight persons away from the parish by sacrificing only the profits that might come to me from the returns of a couple of acres of land, don’t you think I shall be the gainer? Why, I tell you that I would gladly give up a third of Crackstakes at once, were I guaranteed against paying poor-rates on the two-thirds that would be left.”

“But the habits of the people, my good friend,—the habits of the people are not suited to such a state of society. And then, only consider the consequences! Supposing you to succeed fully for this generation, would you not, by encouraging early marriages, hurry forward population, and reduce yourselves in less than thirty years to a worse state than ever? Look at Ireland, where the allotment system

prevails. Surely you would not wish to bring England to that?"

"You crowd too much into one objection," replied Solley; "and I must follow you in detail. First, then, with reference to the habits of the people. These are not, I grant you, what they once were: but what has changed them? Our own improvidence,—our own mistaken methods of dealing with the labourers. We were by far too prodigal both in the wages we gave, and the amount of parochial relief which we afforded, in the good times: and when the bad times came, we found it impossible to go back from established customs. That, however, which we were afraid to do manfully and openly, we strove to accomplish by a sort of fraud. We took to paying our men a portion of their earnings out of the rate; and, by habituating them to be dealt with as paupers, we taught them to consider the character of a pauper as no way disreputable. Of course, the man who is paid by a parish, having no master whom he regards as interested in his welfare, soon ceases to consider his employer's interests, and does as little as he possibly can for his pay. Moreover, by cutting off the labourer from all hope of permanently bettering his condition, (and let me tell you that the large-farm system did that effectually,) we left him without any in-

physical condition and their moral habits. Mind, I don't mean to assert that you will accomplish this in a day. The experiment may partially fail. Many of those to whom we give holdings may disappoint us; but we must make up our minds to that. Only let us persevere, and eventually it appears to me that success is certain.

“Now, as to your second question, ‘Why introduce into England a state of things which has occasioned so much misery in Ireland?’ In the first place, allow me to remind you that there is such a thing as national character. Be the causes what they may, it is certain that the habits of the English and Irish labourer not only differ essentially at this moment, but have always been different. It does not therefore follow that a system which has failed in the one country, supposing it to have received a fair trial there, must fail in the other. But has it been fairly tried in Ireland? I am sure that it has not. I don't mean to pass judgment on living men; but I have read history to no purpose, if it have not shown me that the gentlemen of Ireland—the landed proprietors,—are, and always have been, the very reverse of what the same class are, and always have been, on this side the Channel. The Irish landholder is generally an absentee: he takes

ded comrade. Even on this ground, therefore, I don't think you will be worse off if you enter into my views than you are at present; but you may be better. Accustom men to certain comforts when young, and they will not rashly encumber themselves with wives,—at least till they believe that they will be able, when married, to live as they used to do when single, and to bring up their children as they were reared themselves. Nor is this all. There may be the risk of failure in my plan;—what plan for the future is without such risk? But if we weigh that against the inconveniences actually experienced, which is likely to kick the beam? Besides, I am one of those who hold that we have no right to be thinking always of remote consequences. Show me how I may confer an immediate benefit on society, even when it may be necessary to hazard something in times to come, and I will not hesitate to confer the benefit: because the chances of ultimate good and ultimate evil are equal; and, as I cannot determine between them, I am content to let my descendants take advantage of the first if it comes, and guard against the last if it threaten. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly," answered Mr. Sankey, "and feel the force of all that you have said: but I

am sure the scheme will never answer. Other won't enter into it ; and unless it be universally taken up, it must fail."

"That don't follow neither. To be sure, if men are determined to keep their eyes shut you cannot make them see the sun when he is shining ; but the opportunity of judging for themselves shall certainly be afforded. If Tom Collard and Zachary Joyner, with their large families, keep from the parish and pay their rent, I at least will be satisfied that the system is a good one, and ought to be universally acted upon."

"*If*, Giles, *if*—your *if* is a great peace-maker."

"Be it so : neither am I the sort of man to deliver an opinion on this subject without it. But on the other, — your manufacturing device,—I *have* no misgiving : I am sure that must fail."

"Then you won't go with Rigden to town and help him to find an overseer ?"

"I will do anything the parish wishes, and lend all the help I can when the overseer is found ; but my opinion will not be changed."

"Well, well, time only can determine between us. In the mean while Rigden proposes to start to-morrow by the Tallyho."

"Then I will go home, and be ready to attend him."

CHAPTER II.

CHANGE OF SYSTEM.

By some chance or another, Giles Solley and his companion, on the day following the dialogue transcribed above, found it convenient to proceed no further on their way to town than Sittingbourne. Next morning they found themselves seated on the fore part of Johnson's coach ; when the conversation took a turn which led the kind hearted driver to discover that his passengers were inhabitants of Waltham. He immediately communicated to them as much of Charlotte's history as was then known to himself. The consequence was, that Giles, who felt deeply for the poor girl's misfortunes, left his companion to prosecute his inquiries alone, while he himself proceeded to Newgate, where that meeting took place between him and the dying penitent to which allusion was made in a previous volume.

The feelings of Giles were deeply interested by what he saw and heard within the walls

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manufacturer was fixed at sixty pounds a year. Then followed the selection, under his superintendence, of such pieces of machinery as were deemed indispensable. Looms, spinning-jennies, carding machines, a stock of hemp, of India weed, &c. was laid in ; all of which being paid for in ready money, sent back the parish deputies to their coadjutors in the country with pockets considerably lightened. But a severer drain remained. It was necessary to erect sheds, — to alter the arrangement of various rooms and passages in the house, — to establish workshops ; in one word, to expend, upon what all men felt to be nothing more than an experiment, more than enough to keep the whole of the paupers in full employ for a twelvemonth.

“ Still, if it answer,” was the argument with which the mouth of the grumbler was stopped, “ the money will have been well laid out.”

“ Ah, *if*,” replied Giles : “ your *if* is a great peace-maker.”

Time ran his course, and at the end of several weeks of preparation, — weeks which, by the bricklayers, carpenters, blacksmiths, &c. of the village, were considered as very well spent, — the linen manufactory was pronounced fit for the purposes intended. In the front of the pile no great change could be discerned : it was still, what it used to be, a huge shapeless mass of red

brick, with a garden wall running back at right angles from one gable, and a long wooden gate, with a sort of parapet, extending beyond the other. But he who looked further than the front saw much to admire. From what had originally been a kitchen-garden of perhaps two acres in extent, a court had recently been cut off, along each side of which, so as to form with the mansion three sides of a square, ran a double row of new buildings. The outer tier was on both sides composed of brick, the inner of tarred boarding: the outer tier was roofed with tile, the inner had thatch. Athwart these again, but having passages to the right and left, was a longer shed, two stories in height, formed, like the inner tiers on the flanks, of timber. The whole of these were set apart for manufacturing purposes. Those on the right and left contained looms, wheels, and other implements of labour; that fronting the rear of the mansion was the storehouse. But, besides these, the ingenuity of Mr. Tredgles had fitted up as carding rooms a long range of cells beneath the frontage of the main edifice, all of them lighted by area windows from the road. By such means he calculated that he should be able to keep busy at least twenty grown-up persons, with almost any given number of children; the latter being

used chiefly for spinning, the former for weaving or carding.

While these important works were in progress, it could scarcely be perceived that any effect was produced upon the pauper population of Waltham. They watched the gradual completion of the pile as something in which they had no interest; indeed, the only remark which was ever recorded as escaping any of their number, was a stupid expression of wonder, "what the gentlemen could mean by laying out so much money for no purpose." But when all things were complete, and the new master was inducted into his office—when the old couple that had managed the concern so long became themselves paupers, an order went forth from the committee at its usual place of meeting, which occasioned profound surprise, perhaps dismay, throughout the parish. The applicants for relief were informed, while receiving the customary pittance, that they need not come there for more: all who could not find employment for themselves must now apply to Mr. Treddles, who would set them to such jobs as he considered them capable of executing, and pay them in proportion to the work done. This was the law in reference to married people, who were also invited to send their children to the manufactory, in order that they might learn

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been waiting for events to take the turn which he now witnessed, made a sign that he desired to address the meeting.

"Silence ! silence !" cried out a dozen of voices at once : "hear Jack Knowler ! Jack knows what 's what as well as the best on 'em. Let 's hear what he has to say."

"Gentlemen," began Mr. Knowler, "it's quite clear to me that them there gentlefolks, as they calls themselves,—them there farmers,—won't let us poor men live at all. They've reduced our pay from fifteen to twelve shillings ; they've taken off the allowance for our families ; they won't pay no more rents ; they won't even help us to get shoes or a bit o' clothing for our families. But we've more to complain of nor that. They won't cultivate their fields as they ought to do ; for why ? —because they would then be obligated to employ us all : and they 'd rather half starve themselves nor see us comfortable. And now, to crown all, they've gone and built them there workshops,—them there prisons, I calls 'em,—where they expect us to come and weave for our wittals, and besides shuttin' up our children all day long to be stifled. Now, what I says is this : may I be d—d if I go near them workshops ! Jist look at these here fingers ! could I knock about a shuttle, or feel whether a thread

was coarse or fine, with things like them? I always had a good character as a workman, thank God!—'cause, ye see, I'se always worked at things as I understood. But they might well think of making a chimley-sweeper of me at my years, as a weaver. I'll not weave, thank ye, flat; and if they don't find me some other thing, then I'll see further into it, I'm d—d if I don't.

Jack, as may be imagined, was vehemently cheered while delivering this forcible harangue, and it fell in exactly with the humours of the audience, and a loud shout at its conclusion testified that the judgment delivered was approved of. But, ere the meeting could disperse, another orator mounted the table, and though first saluted with a contemptuous laugh, he soon obtained in his turn a hearing. It was Timothy Twist, the foreman, under the old regime, the hop-bagging concern; a pale, sickly, and haggard, whose countenance, however, though lined and haggard, displayed the marks of some intelligence. "Hear him! hear him!"—"No! no! we've heard enough. No weavers! we don't want weavers to teach us!" These were the cries against which he was obliged for a while to bear up, while beckoning with his hand for silence. At length silence was obtained, and the representative of the manufacturing interests began:—

"Gentlemen—If you think I'm agoing to contradict the gentleman as spoke last, you're very much mistaken: I perfectly agrees with him in all his sentiments. The farmers, and the parsons, and the squires, and the bishops, and the lords, and the king, is all the poor man's enemies. Jist see how they've treated me. I had a sort of a living under Muster Slowfoot, the worthy old governor as they have reduced. To be sure, it weren't no great things neither;—for what's a guinea a week to keep a man and his wife and four children? Howsomever, I made it answer with management, till down comes a new man, as sends me to the right-about; and 'cause I doesn't know how to draw them there threads so fine as he wants them, he tells me he must reduce my wages, and give me only fifteen shillings as a journeyman. I say, then, with Muster Knowler, that the gentlefolks von't let us poor men live at all. But what's the use of talking? How can he see into it? Where will he go for redress? Does he think the magistrates will side with him? Has he forgotten how they used the people at the time of the machine-breaking? And as to going away, and saying, 'I won't work—I'll starve first,' that's what I calls cutting off my own nose to spite my face. No, gentlemen, I propose that we do come here

for a job. Let their new overseer set us at by all means. Can he make us skilful in day? There's Mr. Knowler, for instance, what could *he* do at a loom? Vy, nothing at all except spoil the web. And as to carding or spinning, mayhap he could turn a wheel; but for making a thread, it's my opinion he couldn't make a cable. Therefore I say, let's have no rebellion, no mutiny, no refusing to earn an honest penny in any way that they may put to; and if they find their hemp wasted, or their goods unfit to bring into any market, or then, they may thank themselves: we can't do what we're not used to, but we can show them we're willing to do anything."

"What, then," cried Charley Fox, one of those regular shirkers that are to be found in every parish of England, a young man in the prime of life, who was always lame, or in some other way incapacitated from labour—"you have us single men go quietly into the house and work for our bare wittals?"

"If you can find wittals out of the house and without working, Charley," replied the weaver, "by all means stay out and get them."

"I don't care about going into the house," said the hopeful Charley: "there's wery good grub to be had there. I've tried afore, at

I don't mind trying it again. But work I won't; blow me tight if I do!"

"I thought you had more gumption than I find you have," answered the weaver, with somewhat of a contemptuous intonation. "Who'll get tired first?—you of spoiling the webs and wasting the gentlemen's money, or they of setting you to a sort of employ you don't know nothing about? But it's no use speaking to men when they won't understand."

"*I* understand," shouted a dark-visaged man, apparently about thirty years of age; "*I* see your drift, Tom. Dang it! your wit's worth a score of Jack Knowler's perseverance. I'll hold up both hands for your scheme. What, gentlemen, can't you take?—don't you perceive that he as wastes another's goods has a far better bargain than he as furnishes the goods to be wasted? I vote for closing with the gentleman's proposal at once."

The meeting was not, however, so fully convinced as the last speaker. They had, to be sure, a high respect for his judgment; for Simon Stannard was allowed to be one of the cleverest fellows in the county. But, of all classes of men, your thorough-bred English peasant is the most dogged; being, whether for good or evil, next to immovable after he shall have

wofully thinned, in consequence of the removal by their parents, of boys and girls, to whom, in the new manufactory, an opening was likewise offered.

"Well, what do you think now, Giles?" said Mr. Rigden to his brother churchwarden, the day after the house was filled, and the establishment of carders and spinners completed. "You hinted that we should not find the people willing to alter their habits, and that the manufactory, if worked at all, would be worked by strangers. What do you think now?"

"That neither you nor I have yet seen the end. Stop a while, till these artisans of yours shall have had a trial of their new employment, and you a trial of their skill. My opinion is not changed from what it was at the outset, but I am open to conviction whenever it shall be proved to be erroneous."

"Ah, well, well, Giles, you are your father's son, that's clear enough. I suppose the old gentleman would have lost his senses altogether had he survived to witness such a change as this. And yet I am confident the thing will answer."

"We'll see, we'll see," replied Giles, and turned up the lane that led to Crackstakes.

him, his addiction to which has certainly not improved his morals ; but which, being very seductive in itself, is rendered more so by being spread out on the table of a pothouse or a beer-shop. For it is in the evening, after his work is done, that the agricultural labourer takes his ease, if he take it all. To be sure, the best of that class are content with home even at that season : and if there be any inducement to keep them there,—such as a garden to dig, or a little plot of land to cultivate, — they will never think of going further. But unfortunately these inducements are not always at hand, and the habits of the rural population have suffered grievously from their absence. For the agriculturist is not a sort of animal who makes, or wishes to make, large strides upwards in the scale of humanity. He troubles himself very little with affairs of state ; he has no curiosity in the investigation of sciences. In intellect he is often sharp enough ; but, for want of material on which to exercise it, he loses in a great measure the command of the faculty. The agriculturist hates innovation of every sort : leave him to himself, and he will do in all things what his father did before him ; jog him on by placing within his reach implements of increased utility and convenience, and it is an even chance whether you gratify or sour him. The agri-

culturist has his own virtues and his own vices. Among his virtues, considering him as a member of the community, may be classed a distinct respect for law and station. He exerts a positive exertion to make him turbulent; on the other hand, he is obstinate, and proud, and coarse, and vindictive; and, in his family, sometimes harsh, and even cruel. The young agriculturist is, for the most part, a savage—one whose very movements resemble those of the overgrown beasts whom he tames or leads; but the old agriculturist, if he has escaped the vice of drinking—the besetting sin of Englishmen both in town and country—is unfrequently well-bred, and is almost always religious and humble-minded. Finally, the agriculturist, though stout of heart, is not capable of any chivalrous spirit of daring. In a bout at fisticuffs he will scarce turn against but a few soldiers, with arms in their hands; and will disperse without firing a shot, the uncited rural mob that ever came together.

The reverse of this in almost every case is your operative weaver or clothier. Breathing continually the fœtid atmosphere of a workshop, and spending all the hours of his waking existence in society, the operative has in some sort all consciousness of idleness, and in the feeling that he is but a portio

mighty mass. To a frame often feeble, and almost always unhealthy, he adds a mind restless and active, which, like the wheels in his own machinery, is continually driving at some end, and a degree of intelligence far more available than that of which many that move in a more refined circle can boast. Yet the operative would be as much at a loss how to get through the day were he condemned to spend it alone in the open air, as the agriculturist is to understand how it may be possible to endure an imprisonment of twelve hours' continuance in one of the mills at Manchester or Glasgow. The operative is a reflecting animal; show him that change implies improvement, and he will fall in with it cheerfully and at once; because his understanding on points relating to his own business—and it is of that alone I now speak—is almost always excellent. Moreover, the operative is an ambitious animal. His education, whether neglected in early youth or the reverse, is constantly going on. He is always learning something from those with whom, during the hours both of work and of play, he is associated; and in no species of lore is he more carefully instructed than in that which he is pleased to designate as political economy.

The operative is the vainest of living men; he has learned to repeat by rote the adage

posed in every quality that contributes to produce human character as it is possible to conceive. The one is a creature composed entirely of mind — of a vicious and depraved order perhaps, but still of mind; the other, an animal possessing little more than body. For even in reference to courage I believe that the operative has the advantage, though the inefficiency of his physical powers may often render it useless. And it will further appear, that of all the attempts that ever were made, the effort to introduce among the one class habits which are congenial only to the tempers of the other, must be the most hopeless. Of that truth, however, the members of the vestry at Waltham were either ignorant or forgetful: they thought only of rendering surplus hands available; they never stopped to inquire whether they could succeed, if these hands should be applied to operations in which there was no mind to direct them. But the overseer, Mr. Treddles, was not slow in discovering that the tools with which he was required to work were quite unfit for the given purpose. He looked at the men's hands as they came in—they were all swollen, hard, gristly, and destitute of feeling. He put a few questions here and there, with the view of sounding the depth of their intelligence, and the answers which he received convinced him that it was universally shallow.

"Lord help me!" cried the poor man, shrugging up his shoulders, "I have yoked myself to a pretty burthen indeed." But the remonstrances which he considered it his duty to make were very lightly regarded: the gentlemen did not expect him to work miracles—he must have patience; they would give him all the support in their power, and they were sure that a man of his talent must eventually succeed.

"Succeed in what, sir?" demanded Treddles.

"Why, in converting these idle fellows into profitable workmen, to be sure," replied Mr. Sankey.

"Do you mean the full-grown men?" asked the overseer.

"Undoubtedly I do! Whom should I mean?"

"Then it is right that I should tell you in the outset that the thing is impossible. With the children we may do something, that is, if you are willing to incur some further expense, by authorising me to hire three or four intelligent overlookers. But the men—you might just as reasonably expect to melt a rock with a blazing furze-bush as to make them different from the louts that they are."

The gentlemen stared at one another; and Mr. Sankey and Mr. Higden both looked displeased as they observed a smile curl upon Giles Solley's lip.

"Then, sir," said Mr. Sankey sharply, "we have been taken in. You stated nothing of this sort to Mr. Rigden when he laid our plans before you: you asked only about the extent of accommodation, and the number of hands that were to be placed at your disposal."

"Pardon me, sir," replied Treddles; "if anybody has been taken in, I am he. You did not tell me that the five-and-twenty men and the dozen or two of children whom I was to have under me were all downright clodhoppers!"

"Well, well, gentlemen," interposed Giles, laughing, "it's no use to dispute the point now: we are all of us let in for a good thing, and we must make the most of it. What can your louts do, Mr. Treddles?"

"Possibly they may be able to tease hemp, and turn a few wheels; but I don't want half their number for that purpose. As to anything further, they will never be brought to it."

"And the children?"

"I can't do aught with them neither, unless I have overlookers."

The members of the vestry fumed and fretted; but there was no help for it. A thousand pounds had been expended in buildings and machinery; it would be ridiculous to pull down the one, and sell the other, at a dead loss, without having once made an attempt to use

our progress to attract the sense of sight, that of hearing is strongly affected. While we hesitate, as it were, in a narrow passage, terminated in some sort by a wooden staircase, though leading off to a door beyond, our attention is riveted by a hubbub of voices and an incessant shuffling of heavy feet. The sounds proceed from an apartment to the left of us, the door of which faces a similar aperture to the right; and we are about to satisfy ourselves as to the cause, when Mr. Treddles presents himself and begs us to follow him. We do so, and he leads the way into the apartment on the right, a spacious hall, with two long wooden tables running from end to end, and an ample store of benches.

“What may be the use of this room, Mr. Treddles?”

“It is the dining-hall, sir; and I wish with all my soul I had never seen it.”

“Why so, friend?”

“Because a man had better keep a bedlam than such a place as this. Here they’ve sent me five-and-twenty able-bodied young men, that not only can’t do anything that Christians ought, but won’t do what they can. Did you hear the row they were kicking up as you entered?”

"I did; and I was on the point of going among them to ascertain the cause, when you called me away."

"Oh, then you shall hear the story from their own lips. Come."

We re-cross the passage after this dialogue, and enter what is called the men's apartment. Behold it. It may measure perhaps thirty feet by five-and-twenty. It has two windows, both looking to the road; it is furnished with benches and a capacious fireplace. There are assembled here the five-and-twenty new-comers, with about a dozen old worn-out men, denizens of the same spot for years; and to these are added fifteen or sixteen boys. But the numbers are nothing—it is the way in which they are occupied that strikes us. Not a soul among them has anything to do: they are walking backwards and forwards, cursing, swearing, shuffling on the sanded floor with their feet, and looking in excessively bad humour.

"Hullo, my men! what's all this about?—why are you not busy in the weaving-room?"

"Us weave?" replies Simon Stannard, "what do we know about weaving? Besides, do you think we're going to do anything to oblige that 'ere chap, when he uses us like dogs?"

"What has he done to you, friend?"

"He gives us soup for dinner that I wouldn't

give to a pig, and won't let us smoke our pipes beside the fire."

"That's it, sir—that's the ground of complaint," interposes Mr. Treddles. "Because I won't let them smoke in this room, they all struck work; and because the cook happened to put a little more parsnip than usual into the soup yesterday, they swear they won't touch it again."

"Are they allowed to smoke in the yard?"

"As much as ever they please: but the smell of smoke is offensive to some of the old people, and the custom is therefore prohibited in-doors."

"Now, Simon, what can you say against that? Is it fair that the old should suffer inconvenience to accommodate you, particularly when the yard is open to you?"

"Then why don't they give us a room of our own. It's no wish of ours to be here—we never applied to come in; we wanted work—work that we could put our hands to, and no favour. But, instead of that, they order us in here, and then expect that we're going to give up all our own customs at their pleasure. I'm d—d if I, for one, will stand it!"

"I should like to taste the soup." A basinful is brought forthwith; we examine it, observe that it smells well and looks excellent.

"Do?—List for soldiers, to be sure, or go to sea, or seek your livelihood in any other reputable way ;—do anything that's honest rather than this."

"I'se no fancy for soldiering !" cries one voice. "I'se above a thing of that sort !" cries another. "I'd go to sea," says Charley Fox, "only I must ha' my mother wi' me." A loud laugh follows this sally, the tone of which convinces us that neither argument nor any appeal to personal feeling will have the smallest effect. We therefore turn to Mr. Treddles, and desire him to show us the women's apartment. He complies; but instead of going back the way we came, he leads right through the middle of the throng. A door is opened in the partition beyond, and we are at once in the presence of the ladies.

The first thing that strikes us with astonishment is, that there should be no means of getting at this female saloon except through the men's apartment. We express our surprise to Mr. Treddles, who joins in all our observations, and goes on to say, that the effects are not different from what might be expected. No female, be she young or old, escapes insult of the rudest kind ; and the very children become vitiated before they ought to know good from evil.

"These young men have been in the house

the sick, are supposed to go up again till bedtime. Having completed this survey, which is on the whole satisfactory enough, we mount another flight of stairs, and arrive, as before, at a second corridor. In its arrangements it corresponds exactly to the gallery beneath, and is set apart for the use of the women.

“You don’t mean that the men and women pass by the same stair to their sleeping-rooms, and that there is a communication constantly open between them?”

“Indeed I do, sir; and the moral consequences I leave you to guess. To be sure, I hope to remedy this a little; for the gentlemen have allowed me to put up a door at the bottom of this flight, which will be ready to-morrow. But even that will not render the place fit for the uses which it is designed to serve. If the workhouse system is to be fairly tried, you must have buildings on a totally different plan of construction from this.”

“Have you any sick-ward?”

“No, not in particular: the whole house is supposed to be for the sick and the infirm; and so, when a man or a woman falls ill, we are obliged, in our present crowded state, to nurse them as well as we can. It is true, we try to keep the sickly as much together as possible; and the married people attend on one another.

Here is a room in which an old man be lying."

We enter, and see on a pallet the shriveled wreck of a fellow-creature, his head encased in a red nightcap, and one thin yellow hand stretched out upon the coverlet. He breathes heavily but his eyes are open, and he evidently retains his senses. At the foot of the trundle bed stood sits an old woman, wrapped up in a red duflie-dock to keep herself warm. She has a pair of spectacles on her nose, and a prayer-book lies open before her. The cell in which this couple live and sleep is very small—perhaps twelve feet square: it has a door and window, but no fireplace; and of course the atmosphere, even in winter, is close and stifling—in summer absolutely overpowering. Its furniture, again, consists of a large box or chest, a small table, a stool, and the bedstead.

"Has your husband been long ill, dame?"

"He's been failing, sir, these three years; but at Whitnautide he grew worse, and now I think he won't be long here. It will be a happy release whenever God pleases to take him,—and he knows that."

The old man bowed his head, as if assenting to this sentiment.

"And you nurse him yourself, dame?"

"As well as I can, sir: but master is very

good ; he sends one of the women often to help me. He's very good to us all."

"Does the clergyman ever visit you?"

"Oh yes, sir, very often. It's the greatest comfort we have: for this world was never much to us at the best of times, and now it's nothing."

We turn to Mr. Treddles, and ask him what sort of people these are.

"They are a worthy, contented old couple: I wish all the rest were like them. And, to say the truth, I don't find the old people in general hard to manage. But to try this new plan with the young, in a place so ill adapted for the experiment—It can't succeed, sir, and it won't."

We heartily assent to Mr. Treddle's opinion ; drop a coin into the dame's hand to buy tea, and walk away, not without something like a suspicion that more would yet come of the manufacturing device.

Tom Collard's cottage was one of two which adjoined; the other being occupied by Zachary Joyner. They stood in the middle of a small garden, by the front fence of which ran a low sandy lane, while behind was a small hill, with a windmill on the top of it. You stepped over a sort of stile to reach the door, and found yourself on a paved front-door path, so perfectly clean, that it seemed as if it were washed as regularly as the cottage floor. On your left lay Tom's flower and vegetable garden, very limited in extent, but kept with a degree of neatness that both surprised and delighted. A little bed of onions, a little bed of greens, a couple of rows of peas, a few carrots—these were the main produce of the glebe; and they were divided by clumps of polyanthus pinks, a carnation or two, and as many hyacinths; rose-bushes forming the hedge that kept them apart from the centre walk. On your right was the cottage, with its casement windows below and above, not one diamond pane in which was broken: and when you passed the threshold, you entered upon an apartment, low in the roof, to be sure, but clean as woman's hands could make it, and thereby strongly indicative of the tastes of the occupants.

When Giles paid his visit this evening, Collard

was one of Giles's steady men,—and in a frank and manly tone begged him to take a seat. The other did so freely, but requested that Tom would finish his supper.

“Oh, there's no hurry about that, sir,” said he: “the boys will eat theirs, if you please, because the garden behind, wants a little dung to it, and we have the prospect of rain before to-morrow; but I can attend you wherever you want me.”

“I don't want to take you from home, Col-lard,” replied Giles; “I have come rather to have a little talk with you where we are. How are you getting on?—what sort of a living do you make?”

“Thank you, sir, I have no right to complain. God has been very good in keeping sickness from my door this good while; and as long as we are all sound in wind and limb, we can rub on somehow.”

“I am glad of it, Tom; and yet I think you might be better. You have a garden, I see.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Tom, with an expression of alarmed pride in his eye; “and if you fancy I don't do my best with it, I beg you to look round.”

“I think you do make the most of it, Tom. But it is very small: it can't be of much service to you.”

“And how can it be otherwise, my good fellow? Only look at the poor’s rates: they are enough to break down both landlord and tenant.”

“So they are, sir; and so they will be, as long as you either pay men for doing nothing, or make up wages, which each ought to pay out of his own pocket, from the poor-book. Now, if, instead of doing this, you would let each poor man have a little field, then all that wished to make a living would be able to do so, and the idle might starve, as they deserved.”

“I am very glad to hear you talk so rationally, Tom; for, to say the truth, the sole purpose of my visit this evening was to ascertain whether you would yourself like to hire a couple of acres, and to take them on such conditions as I can afford to propose.”

Tom looked at his master with an expression of joy, hope, and hesitation in his countenance, which Giles could not observe without emotion. He replied, however, like a cautious man, by demanding the nature of the proposed conditions.

“That you shall pay to me the very same proportional amount of rent that I pay to my landlord; that you pay this twice a year; that you be liable to all the customary burthens, such as rates, cesses, taxes, tithes; and that

venture to say my name will not be found five times in the list of persons relieved."

"I know all that, Tom; and therefore I have the less hesitation in making these stipulations with you. But I can't be off making them; they are quite indispensable."

"Nor do I object to them, I assure you, sir. I only said what I did, to convince you that in agreeing to your terms I put no violence on my feelings."

"Well, then, is it settled between us?"

"I think so," answered Tom: "and yet, if you would be so good as give me a day to consider and make my calculations, I should be better satisfied. I have no fear that I shall change my mind; but one likes to see the road clear before one, ere one sets out from home. If you will give me till to-morrow, you shall have my decided answer then."

"By all means, Tom; indeed your caution only confirms the opinion which I had previously formed of you, that if there was a man in the parish with whom this experiment could be tried, you are he. But tell me, do you know of any body else to whom I could safely make a similar offer?"

"There's Zachary Joyner, sir, next door, as hard-working a man as any in the parish, with a family just the size of my own: if you want

"Of course: and, what is more, that you may start fairly, I will furnish you with seed, and plough your land for you, if you wish it."

"Seed for nothing, sir?"

"Yes; seed for nothing."

"Why, then, it must be our own faults indeed if we don't make the thing answer."

That very day Giles carried his under-tenants along with him, and pointed out the parcel of land which he meant each to have. It formed a portion of a field of which the soil was excellent, and lay about a quarter of a mile from their cottage. The amount of rent also was settled. Giles paid on an average forty shillings per acre for Crackstakes, and he exacted forty shillings per acre for his men's glebes; and then, by calculating the amount of other burthens fairly, it appeared that Col-lard and Joyner would be called upon to provide each about seven pounds of hard cash, to be paid as Lady-day and Michaelmas-day came round. Still the men were not frightened at the amount; they had calculated liberally over-night, and Giles made them fully aware of the correctness of his computations. They therefore returned to their wives and families glad at heart, and were welcomed with smiling countenances.

"And only think, Tom," said Joyner, as

Finally, plots were partitioned off for crops of various kinds ; the soil was manured, prepared, and laid up ; the seed was put in, and the whole handed over to the little farmers.

"So you persist in your scheme, Giles?" said Mr. Sankey, who had watched the process with a curious eye. "Ours hasn't answered, and therefore I am more shy than I once was of condemning yours ; but I can't say that I expect much from it."

"Wait a bit, wait a bit," was the reply : "we are only beginning. I think it will answer ; and if it does——"

"Ah, your *if* is a great peacemaker, you know. But if it does, why then I think I must follow your example."

"So be it," answered Giles : "I want no more."

work is of no value. Nay, let 's have him in, and he will speak for himself."

Mr. Treddles obeyed the call, and Mr. Sankey went on to address him.

"We have been considering the complaints you bring against the men, and what we can best do to relieve you. Tell us fairly, is their work of any value to you?"

"Value!—no, sir; they won't work, or they can't work, one or the other. Indeed, I would rather be without their help than not."

"Suppose we were to send them every day to the parish farm, and make them return here for their meals and beds,—what then?"

"Oh, send them anywhere, so that they shall be for some hours in the day out of this house. The noise and disturbance they make is enough to drive one mad; and their language is shocking."

"You don't mean to pay them for working on the farm, surely?" said Mr. Rigden.

"Of course not," replied Mr. Sankey. "They must work for their food and clothing, which, I'll be bound, they won't earn. But what of the children, Treddles?"

"They might learn something were the men away; but while you permit bad characters like these to associate with the boys, you must expect to have the latter corrupted."

for you like a man. But to be treated in this way,—no, I won't stand it!"

"Very well, sir,—the consequences be on your own head," replied Mr. Rigden. "The bell will ring for you to go to work at six; and if you don't show yourself on the farm at half-past six at the latest, why then I will see how you can be forced."

"I don't care that for you or your threats either!" exclaimed the pauper, snapping his fingers. "Do your worst, what can you do? get me sent to the treadmill for a week;—what's that to me? I won't go to work."

So said the rest of the men, in language not the most refined; while the members of the vestry contented themselves by ordering the room to be cleared. But when it was cleared, a discussion recommenced, abundantly conclusive of the absence of confidence and satisfaction among those engaged.

"To have laid out a thousand pounds, and all for this!" exclaimed one.—"To be bullied and beaten by a set of rascallions like these!" cried another. "Upon my honour, I believe they will keep their words!" cried a third.

"Gentlemen," said Giles, "you will do me the justice to remember, that from the first I warned you the plan would fail. However, being in the matter, let us go through with it like men.

offensive short of the actual demolition of property. Such was the state of things when the magistrate arrived ; and the effect of his coming was scarcely less ludicrous than it was striking.

As if a bolt from heaven had fallen in the midst of them, the rioters instantly dispersed. Some ran one way, some another ; and all appeared anxious to find some place of concealment from the eye of authority. But Colonel Hamilton had made up his mind to deal with the ringleaders as they deserved. The whole body were accordingly brought before him ; the charge was regularly adduced, and Stannard and Fox being convicted of disobedience of orders and rioting, were sentenced each to three weeks on the treadmill. With respect to the rest, they were, on promise of amendment, set at liberty. But, in the presence of all, Treddles was reminded that the law would bear him out in maintaining his own authority ; and the parish-officers were directed, in case there should not be a strong-room in the house already, to get one built with as little delay as possible. The parishioners promised to attend to this recommendation, and the colonel returned home, having first seen twenty-three out of the twenty-five recusants shoulder their

wall, in defiance both of threats and of remonstrances. It was to no purpose that from time to time some fresh example was made: even the tread-mill, by being rendered too familiar, lost its terrors; and the spirit of mutiny and insubordination appeared to be irrepressible.

Thus passed the summer months, which proved endurable within doors only because the paupers, setting laws and regulations at defiance, were almost continually abroad. Next came the harvest, which to poor Treddles was a season of perfect happiness, inasmuch as his rioters, finding temporary employment in the corn-fields and hop-gardens, left him to himself, and sought lodging and entertainment elsewhere. But the harvest also wore away—the hopping drew to an end; and with the return of long nights and stormy days, came back, as inmates under his roof, the identical five-and-twenty daring spirits with which he had hitherto contended to so little purpose. Nor was this all: by way of relieving large families, children were poured in upon him by dozens, till his sleeping accommodation had become quite inadequate to meet the demand for beds.

“I tell you, Mr. Solley,” said he to Giles, who lingered behind his associates one business-day that he might ascertain a little how mat-

highest rent for it, and employ these men advantageously."

"I will put it to them," replied Giles; "but I warn you beforehand not to anticipate a compliance with your wishes. Still, the trial shall be made."

Giles was not mistaken in the idea which he had formed as to the point of view in which his brother parishioners were likely to regard the proposal of their hired governor. To a man they scouted it. "Where is the land to come from? I am sure I won't spare twelve acres of mine."—"Nor I!"—"Nor I!" And so it went round the circle. By dint of entreaty, however, Giles prevailed upon them to make an offer in the name of the parish to a farmer whose holding lay contiguous to the house. Now it so happened that this man was the owner of his farm: he had purchased it a few years previously: he occupied and cultivated it himself, and was one of the loudest declaimers against the unprofitableness of the farmer's business, and the inevitable destruction of the agricultural interest. "If I had been but wise enough," such was the burthen of his song, "to keep my money in the funds, I might have got three-and-a-half per cent. for it; and now I get hardly any interest at all." It was very fairly assumed, that were this man

Treddles's views were entirely at a loss where to turn next. All the principal occupiers had already been appealed to in vain; and they knew that it would be useless to think of getting from the lesser tenants, what each of them valued as much as the poor man in Nathan's fable valued his ewe lamb. The idea, therefore, of hiring a glebe for the master of the workhouse was abandoned.

"I told you how it would be, Treddles," said Giles: "I was quite sure we should not succeed."

"And I tell you again, Mr. Solley, "that the parish will find cause to repent it. A month or two of absolute idleness will make these men such as no fear of punishment will suffice to keep in awe."

"Very likely, Treddles; but the fault is neither yours nor mine. You have given the parishioners ample warning; you have shown them how hopeless was their dotage from the first; and I have set them an example which, if they had chosen to follow at the outset, all that has already happened, with a great deal more that may happen, might have been avoided. Therefore we have nothing wherewith to reproach ourselves. And with respect to the rest, God's will be done! Does Mr. Jacobson visit you often?"

CHAPTER VI.

PROGRESS OF THE SYSTEM OF TERROR.

MR. JACOBSON came to the workhouse a few hours after the above conversation took place, and the governor did not fail to report to him its substance. The worthy curate heard him attentively, and then expressed his willingness to do anything that held out a prospect, however remote, of restoring order to the parish.

"But what's the use of my attending meetings in which men are all resolute to follow their own devices, without listening to reason? This foolish expense, for example, in enlarging the workhouse never would have been incurred, had the parishioners known what they were about."

"And who knows, sir," replied Treddles, "but that if you had attended the meetings it never would have been incurred?"

Mr. Jacobson mused for a moment or two, and then said, "That's very true, Mr. Treddles: I believe that I have done wrong. I am

to the more industrious of the labourers was at least worthy of a trial.

"Will you then, sir, support me," continued Giles, "if I bring forward the motion again, whenever a favourable opportunity offers?"

"You may depend upon it that I will," replied Mr. Jacobson. "But when can that opportunity offer? So much has been laid out on these foolish workshops, that nothing which either you or I can say will ever prevail upon the rest to abandon them."

"Lord knows!" answered Giles: "but I have a strong suspicion that they won't stand much in our way by the time the violets are out."

"What do you mean, Giles?" demanded the curate.

"I really don't know: perhaps I have no meaning. But, somehow or another—Ah, well, never mind; you'll support my motion, sir, when the opportunity offers?"

"You may rely on me, Giles: I will give it all the support I can."

And so the confederates parted; Giles returning to his usual occupations at Crackstake; the curate betaking himself first to his studies, and by-and-by to visiting the sick and the poor within his district.

Contrary to the expectations of all concerned, the winter passed by without the occurrence of

conclusion, but I entirely object to your premises. The ticket system is in fact the system of paying our labourers out of the rate,—in other words, making paupers of all the men, without distinction, and compelling Mr. Jacobson and others, who occupy no land, to contribute towards the cultivation of our fields. I think, therefore, that the magistrates are quite right in setting their faces against that. But I perfectly agree in your opinion, that it is far better to pay the men for doing something than for doing nothing."

"Perhaps, then, you will have the goodness to explain how you would employ them?" said Mr. Rigden with a sneer.

"I have nothing new to suggest on that score," replied Giles: "my faith is pinned to the allotment plan. It may fail, to be sure; but I don't think it will."

"Have you been paid your half-year's rent yet?" demanded Mr. Rigden.

"To be sure I have, punctually to the day: and had you seen the men's faces when they paid it, and still more, accompanied them, as I did, to their little glebes, it would have done your heart good. There is not one among us that has any portion of his farm half so well cultivated as are the occupations of my two honest tenants."

“Master seemed much pleased with my punctuality,” continued Collard. “God bless him ! he didn’t know how happy I was to be punctual. Only look, Zachary, look at that crop of wheat ;—don’t you think it will more than pay all the expenses ?”

“I am sure of it, Tom : indeed, I lay awake last night making my calculations ; and I have made up my mind not only to pay my rent, but after harvest to buy a cow. It will take some pinching, to be sure : but who minds pinching when there’s a prospect of bettering ourselves ?”

“Ah, that’s it, Zachary, that’s it ! If the gentlefolks could only believe that we are the same flesh and blood with themselves, they would see, that if you want a poor man to be moral, and religious, and sober, you must show him how these things are to be of use to him. This you and I do see. By denying ourselves a little beer, and may be ’bacey, and patching up our old bits, and working hard, we feel that we shall at least be independent ; and hang me if I would give up that prospect for all the fun of the Red Lion or the Anchor !”

“But that’s not all, Tom. See how our boys are kept busy ! Bless their little hands ! they are as much used to the spade already as our own. And how happy the rogues are

again, and there is still the same jog-trot,—the parish farm all day—the parish workhouse all night.”

“Great trouble to you the parish farm is, to be sure! Why, what would you be at? Do you want hard work? Do you want better grub than they give you here?”

“No, I want neither the one nor the other; but I do want liberty. I have not had a pint of beer at a public-house these four months.”

“And so you would give up all the comforts you have here for the liberty of getting drunk at the Anchor?”

“What the d—l! you don’t mean that *you* wish this state of things to continue?”

“To say the truth, Charley, I begin to think that we can’t be much better off anywhere than we are here. We have nothing to think of: everything is provided; the very beer, though not so much as we could wish, is excellent. Dang me if I know how we would better ourselves were the system changed!”

“So-ho! you have made up your mind to it, have you? and that’s the reason we have all been so quiet of late? The deuce take me if I have done anything of the sort! I won’t stand it much longer, that you may rely upon; so look out!”

“Now don’t do anything rashly, Charley.

day; and unless I give up my two hours at noon, I shan't be able to finish it, I am certain."

"Can't you get up in the morning, man, and work by candlelight?"

"Yes, but there's an order against carrying candles down here."

"And you care about an order, do you? Well, I thought you had been a better one than that, too."

"Where am I to get a candle?" asked the boy in a petted tone.

"Oh, I'll give you a penny, and you can go out and buy it now: master is busy with the gentlemen in the 'mittee-room, and won't miss you."

Away to the grocer's shop ran Joe Williams, where he made his purchase, as Charley Fox had predicted, in profound secrecy. He returned likewise before his absence had been noticed, and retired to bed at the appointed time, carrying his treasure along with him. He took care, however, in passing, to make Fox acquainted with the success that had attended their joint enterprise, and to assure him that he should be up long before the bell rang, and get half his task over by breakfast-time. "And then whither shall we go?" demanded the boy eagerly.

CHAPTER VII.

RESULTS OF THE WORKHOUSE SYSTEM.

It might be about five o'clock in the morning consequent on the day just alluded to, when a loud knocking at his bed-room door roused Giles Solley out of one of those deep and refreshing slumbers of which the children of luxury know nothing except by name. He raised himself on his elbow, and seeing that all was dark around him, desired to be informed of the cause of the interruption.

"Get up, sir,—for God's sake get up!" cried his hinde: "the workhouse is all in a blaze. The storehouse is on fire, and they don't expect to save anything except the people's lives!"

There needed no second summons to bring Giles from a bed which now could have had no charms for him. He sprang up, threw on part of his clothes opened the window, and looked out. It so chanced that his window faced the village, and that the workhouse, a

conspicuous object from all points, stood between him and the street. No sooner, therefore, was the shutter drawn back, than there burst in a light so brilliant as to render any other aid in completing his toilet unnecessary. His apartment was indeed illuminated as with a dozen of torches; while, outside, every tree, bush, shed, house, and other object stood forth amid the glare of that fierce blaze in full proportions. Giles was very much agitated. The fire at Mr. Amos's had been startling enough, though it threatened little else than the produce of the farm: but this, raging as it did about a dwelling filled to repletion with human beings, of whom some were bed-ridden and others weak in intellect, affected him with very different sensations. He was but a few seconds in dressing; and then he rushed from his house, intent only on one object,—namely, to see that neither young nor old were left to perish through a catastrophe which he judged already to be irremediable.

Giles ran at the top of his speed towards the point of danger, but found that half the parish was already there before him. All, indeed, who dwelt within sound of the church-bell had been alarmed by its pealing, and now surrounded the blazing pile in a dense crowd; but there was a total absence of organization.

from among them, as well as symptoms, not obscurely displayed, of disorder.

"Hurrah for the blaze!" shouted one voice. "Let it burn away and be d—d!" cried another. "This is what they get by building prisons for poor men that want bread!"

"Shame! shame!" cried Giles. "Are you Englishmen, to hold such language while the lives of your fellow-creatures are in danger. Come, my lads, form a double row, and handle your buckets as you did at Mr. Amos's! I'll show you the example!"

Giles seized a bucket, and ran towards the store-room door. It was locked, and several minutes elapsed ere the key, which hung in the governor's bed-room, could be procured, and the bolt drawn. But the act was a rash one; for immediately there issued forth a volume of flame which drove him and all the crowd back, and which, catching a bundle of dry bean-stalks that had been imprudently piled up between the store-house and the workshop near, caused it to ignite. All eyes were forthwith turned towards the latter building, of which the walls were composed of tarred boarding, and the roof of thatch; and a cry was raised to pour water upon it. But there was no engine at hand; and the buckets, being either inadequate in point of number or very

power to avert, as to forget that another and a more painful duty remained for them to perform. The causes of the fire must be investigated; and believing that such investigation could not be conducted anywhere so effectually as on the spot, nor at any moment with better effect than while men's minds were under the influence of the tremendous spectacle, a messenger was despatched for Colonel Hamilton. He arrived in as short a space of time as was necessary for the coming and going of a horse at full speed, and was immediately closeted with Mr. Treddles. It is not necessary to detail at length the particulars of the evidence then taken; but the heads of the governor's statements I am bound to give, inasmuch as upon the conclusions drawn from them all future proceedings were founded.

Mr. Treddles could not deny that he suspected the fire to be wilful. He had long laboured under apprehensions that something of the sort would occur, and had stated them to the gentlemen in vestry;—indeed, his surprise was that a fire had not broken out sooner. But as to fixing the imputation on any one or two out of a body so reckless as that over which he presided, he confessed that on such a step he was almost afraid to venture. Being pressed, however, he reluctantly owned that Simon

that he was down at bell-ringing: his coming down previous to the alarm was a circumstance unprecedented. He was immediately taken into custody.

Fox had no account to give as to his early rising that day. It might be unusual with him; but being unable to sleep, he had quitted his bed, and certainly had made an attempt to light a fire below, in which he had not succeeded. He declared, however, that he had not been near the storehouse; he had never so much as crossed the threshold, nor entered into the yard. And as to setting fire to the storehouse, how could that be? The door was locked when Mr. Solley tried to open it; and there was no window accessible, except by a ladder.

The state of the building when Giles endeavoured to force an entrance told in Fox's favour; so, without being either released or held guilty, he was ordered to stand on one side, while two boys, who had been talking a good deal in the yard, should be examined. They were introduced separately; and one, after a good deal of pressing, deposed that the other, Joe Williams, showed him a candle overnight, which he said he had bought at the grocer's shop. He had not, however, told him to what use he meant to turn the candle; but he

He was warned of the perilous position in which he stood, and desired to speak the truth. The boy trembled, cast a look of peculiar meaning towards Fox, and then declared that he would confess all. The story was this:—He bought the candle, intending to get over a part of his work in good time, so that he might have the afternoon for play. Charley Fox had helped him to strike a light, and he went with it to his cell under the front area. While he was hard at work, Fox came to him; and as they were larking, the candle fell among some loose tow, which took fire. They both tried to extinguish it, but did not succeed till all was burned. And now the great object to be accomplished was to conceal the accident; with which view Fox and he had gathered the ashes together, thrust them into an old bag, and buried them in the dung-heap. And that was all he knew, for he had never been near the storehouse.

To challenge Fox with having spoken falsely when he asserted that he had never passed into the yard, was the first act of the examiners; a charge to which he pleaded guilty, on the plea that he had been unwilling to bring the boy into trouble. To search the dung-heap for the bag of which the boy spoke was the next step taken; but the search proved fruit-

that, with the best intentions in the world, they had grievously erred in all their recent dealings with the poor. "I am the last man in the world," continued he, "to yield myself, or to advise others to yield, to threats and intimidation; but he who expects to obtain a permanent influence over the minds of his fellow-men, in this country, by other means than those of mixed kindness and vigour, has entirely deceived himself. I do not blame you for making the idle pauper feel that he is not to enjoy both idleness and comforts; though even the idle may be reclaimed sometimes, by holding out to them inducements to acquire a contrary disposition. Now this, I am afraid, you have never done,—at least never in a way which falls in with an Englishman's preconceived notions of right and wrong; but, running into an enormous expenditure, you have attempted to introduce suddenly among your people a state of society to which all their prejudices and the habits of their former lives stood opposed. I must say that this workhouse and manufacturing scheme of yours was never looked at by me except with disapprobation." "What would you have us to do, sir?" demanded Mr. Sankey. "There is absolutely no work to which to set the people,—at least, none

together for a while, after the colonel quitted them, determined to take his advice. Some weeks elapsed, however, ere Lord Brambling and Sir Marmaduke found it convenient to attend to their request. Not that they were either blind to the sound policy of the measure, or insensible of the moral obligation which, as owners of the soil, attached to them, of promoting, by every means in their power, the welfare of those under them. But the one was a Whig, the other a Tory; and party politics stood so much between them, that it required something more than the abstract sense of right to break down the wall of partition. But that which the petition of the tenantry might have failed to accomplish, an elaborate account of the fire, and its probable causes, given in strong language by Colonel Hamilton, brought to pass. The peer and the commoner met on neutral ground, and fixed a day for a second meeting at Waltham.

Previous to the arrival of that day, the indefatigable magistrate had pushed his inquiries to the utmost, and made himself master of all the facts connected with the late calamity. They were of a dubious nature; yet his good sense and good feeling induced him to put upon them the most favourable construction. If the boy's voluntary statement to his mother

CHAPTER VII.

RESULTS OF THE ALLOTMENT SYSTEM.

At length the day arrived,—and an important day it was to Waltham,—when Lord Brambling and Sir Marmaduke Littlebourne, attended by their stewards, bailiffs, and principal tenants, assembled in the great room of the Red Lion. They had not been careless inquirers into the condition of the parish during the three previous days which they had spent there, but came full of information on every subject which was likely to undergo discussion. When, therefore, they had listened to all who chose to address them,—and at such meetings there is seldom any lack of oratory, good or bad or indifferent,—Lord Brambling, to whom the chair had been conceded, rose and spoke as follows:

“It is very evident to me, gentlemen, that the state of this parish, and indeed I may add of the whole of the agriculturists of England, is in the highest degree unsatisfactory. I cannot say, however, that I have heard anything

as to taxes, really, gentlemen, we agriculturists have not much to complain of on that score. The malt-tax may, indeed, appear to affect us exclusively; but, to counterbalance that, we have a protecting duty on corn, and the assessed taxes we scarcely feel at all. But this is not all. I must remind you of one or two plain matters of fact in reference to the question at issue between us and the fundholders; for it is no use blinking the question. What you want,—what most farmers want,—is a violation of the public faith, either by deteriorating the currency, as must be done if we return to one-pound notes, or by Cobbett's equitable adjustment. Now, consider.

“We will look back, if you please, to the year 1792, just before the commencement of the late war. Two individuals, we will suppose, then retired from business, each with a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. This, being laid out in the purchase of five per cent. stock, brought to each an annual return of a thousand pounds: but one, being ambitious of becoming a landowner, purchased an estate, and his income fell to six hundred a year. The war began;—prices advanced seventy-five per cent., and taxes were imposed to the amount of fifteen per cent. The fundholder was in consequence obliged to reduce his establish-

that they and their descendants should receive a specified interest, to be realized out of taxes levied on commodities that are consumed by that community, of which they, not less than the land-owners, form a part? Nor is the case of the farmer different. The capital embarked in farming during the war made immense returns.

War is, indeed, both your harvest and ours: but after having had twenty years of it, we are not justified in demanding now, that the fundholder shall be sacrificed, and the national faith broken, in order to deliver us from embarrassments mainly, I am afraid, of our own creation.

"Gentlemen, the war made the fortunes of many individual agriculturists: on the body at large it has brought the greatest evils. We all forgot ourselves during those prosperous times, and contracted habits and encouraged ideas with which we had no business. As a landlord, I feel that the day in which I began to merge my many small farms into one or two great farms, I laid the foundation of incalculable mischief to myself and others. You, likewise, in your eagerness to outbid one another, contributed to hurry forward a catastrophe of which I, and you, and the labouring men that work for us, are all now reaping the bitter fruits. It strikes me, therefore, that we cannot do better than return by degrees to the practices of our

I can't help it: I will still live within my income. On the other hand you must practise economy, both in your domestic arrangements, and in the management of your parochial finances; for you may depend upon it that much more can be done at home than men generally suppose. But, above all, gentlemen, eschew party spirit, and set your faces against all, be they Whigs, or Tories, or Radicals, who labour to bring political discussion into private life, or seek the accomplishment of any object by appealing to the blind passions of the crowd. I don't care by what title such men may designate themselves,—they are the worst enemies of their country and of mankind. Encourage, likewise, a religious feeling among your labourers, by setting them an example in your own persons of attention to the services of the church, and by making your lives correspond with the outward respect with which you treat these services.

“I have nothing more to say. I have examined minutely every branch of the subject, and I am convinced, that though we may never get back to what we were twenty years ago, (and I for one should much lament it if we could,) it is still in our power greatly to better both our own condition and that of the labouring poor: and, as the first step towards

plies both families with milk; they rear their pigs, of which a portion is carried to market; they pay their rents regularly; and they are bringing up their children to habits of morality, industry, and religion.

Of the turbulent young men whose proceedings in the workhouse have been detailed, some have sobered down into steady husbandmen; others, including Charley Fox, are as loose and as idle as ever. But they receive no countenance from a population which is becoming year by year more steady and more well-behaved. They are therefore exceedingly uncomfortable, as those always must be who, whether for good or for ill, stand like isolated creatures in society. Nay, they have sometimes been heard to regret the destruction of the manufactory, and the consequent abandonment of a device which offered such a field for strife.

I have only to add, that Mr. Treddles has gone back to the house of West and Co. in London, where, among the gaping operatives he fails not of exciting both wonder and contempt for their agricultural brethren, as often as he favours them, as he frequently does, with one of the Chronicles of Waltham.

THE END.